THE PAINTED ICONS

Wall Paintings of the Sauras of South Orissa

Dinanath Pathy



The lively and fascinating wall painting traditions of Sauras, one of the primitive tribes of Orissa get an art-historical focus in this publication. The study brings to light several Saura painters, their paintings and styles. Profusely illustrated with monochrome and multicolour reproductions, schematic drawings, motif-style charts, map and house plan, the book brings out the richness of the Saura Icons and its varied manifestations.

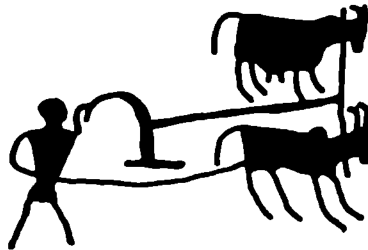
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Wall Paintings of the Sauras of South Orissa



Harman Publishing House, New Delhi
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1996

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Project Associates
Dr. B.K. Rath, D.N. Rao, Balakrishna Nanda
Dillip Kumar Tripathy

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Saura Icons in Puttasing village

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Sacrifice of hen before the icon

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A view of Marichaguda, a Saura Village
on the plains in Padmapur area

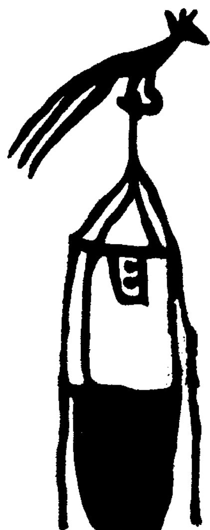
Foreword

Orissa is fabulously rich in material culture of the tribals. About sixty-two tribes live in Orissa. They have their own forms of art, architecture, dance and music which they have nurtured in seclusion and which is an integral part of their life style. The tribal culture is at the substratum of Orissan art and culture. Interdisciplinary studies should be taken up to elaborate this link.

Sauras are primitive tribes who inhabit the hilly area of Koraput, Gunpur, Ganjam and Gajapati districts in South Orissa with a long tradition of painting, besides other cultural attainments, which are linked with the cult of Jagannatha. Due to urbanisation, industrialization and modern influences, the life-style of the Sauras are changing along with their cultural values. It has, therefore, become quite imperative to document their art for posterity.

I congratulate the efforts of the Crafts Council of Orissa who have taken up this project of documenting the Saura wall paintings and painters with the financial support from the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, Government of India. Dr. Dinanath Pathy, a renowned artist and scholar, has done a commendable job by projecting the Saura artists and their art through this publication.

I take special pride in the Saura art traditions as well as in this project since I too belong to this great community, physically, emotionally and creatively.



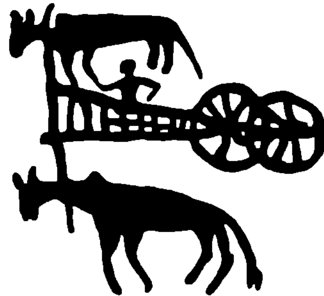
18 December, 1995

Dr. Giridhar Gamang
Minister for Mines
Government of India

Preface

Documentation of visual material in the field of creative arts has become a responsibility on the part of our country and its sensitive people, specifically when the country is endowed with a rich cultural heritage. Each area of our country including Orissa is rich in cultural values and material. The responsibility assumes significance when two third of the population of a state are tribals who have living art traditions.

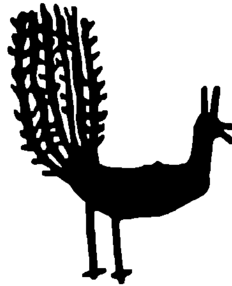
Sauras are a colourful tribe whose painted icons have created interest in several scholars to study this unique tradition of painting. Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist from England was the pioneer in this area of research. Later, several researchers have worked on Saura tribes. The present studies conducted by the Crafts Council of Orissa is with a different approach focusing on the artists and their creations. It is for the first time that such a study has been undertaken.



I congratulate the team comprising Dr. B.K. Rath, D.N. Rao, Dillip Kumar Tripathy, Balakrishna Nanda and particularly the team leader, Dr. Dinanath Pathy who has taken up this study on behalf of the Crafts Council of Orissa. The Council is grateful to the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, Government of India for the financial support to undertake this project.

Prof. M.N. Das
Chairman
Crafts Council of Orissa

Contents





1. Saura Icons in Antarjholi village

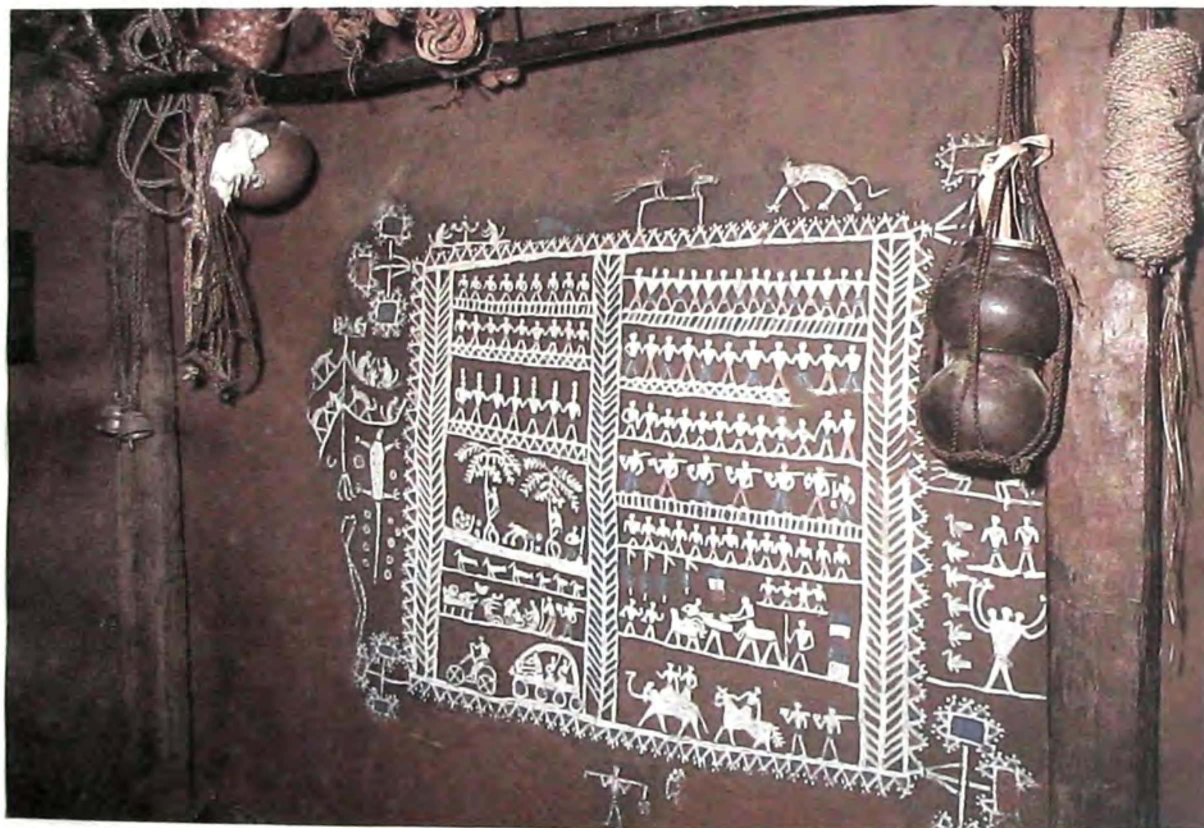


2. Saura Icons in Puttasing village

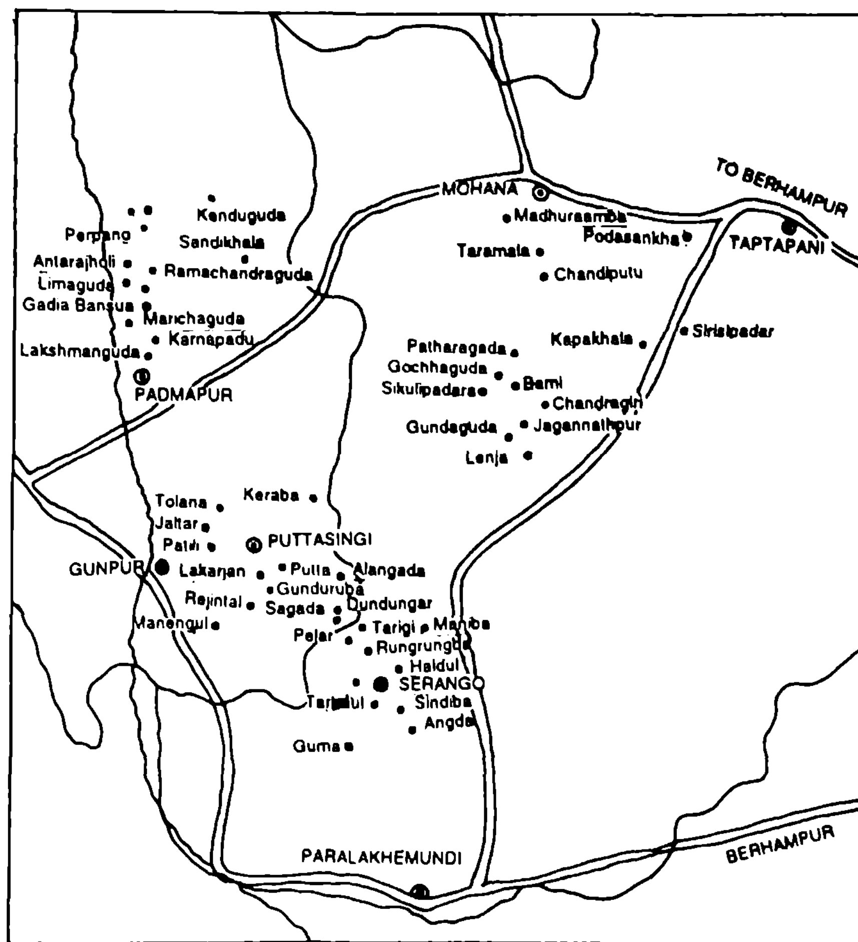
3. Saura Icons in Putta village



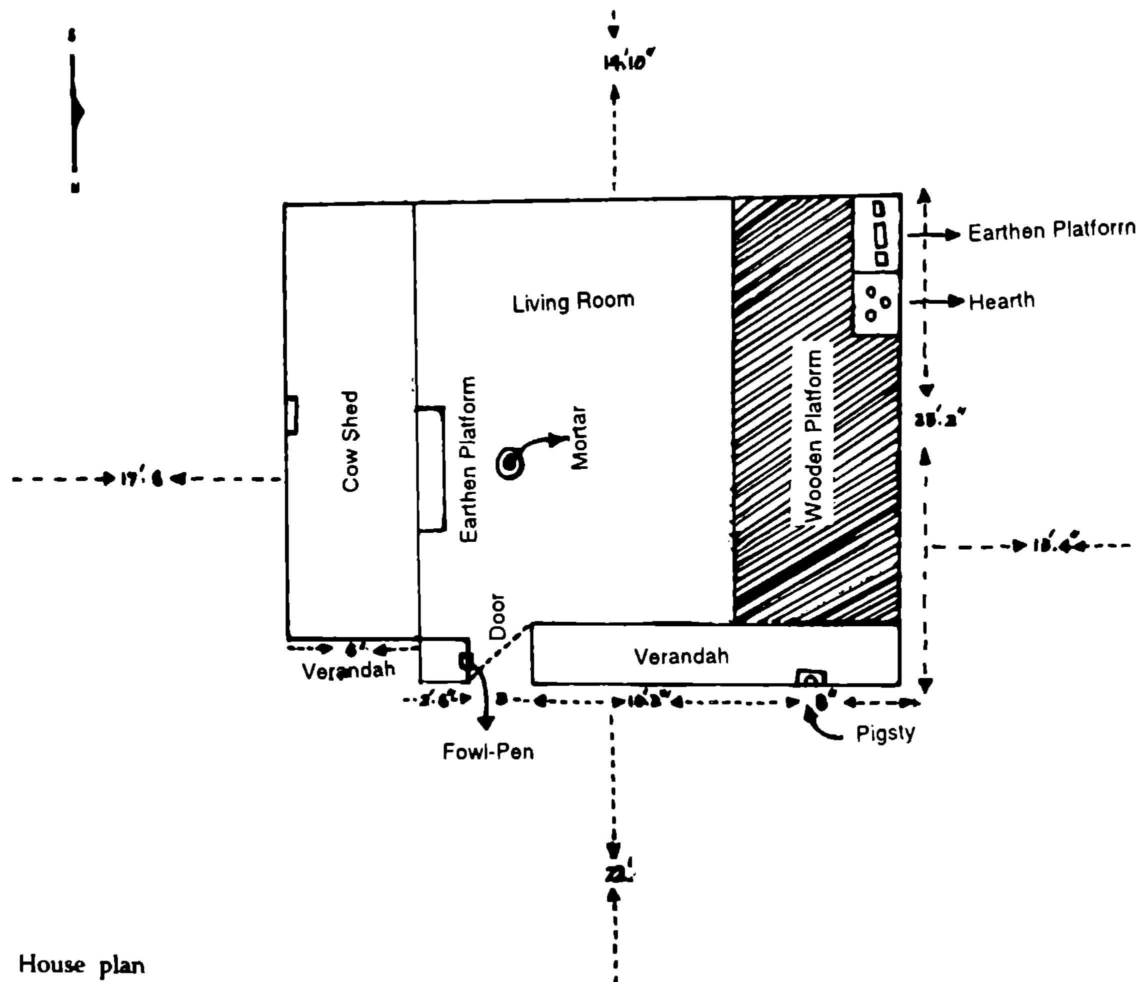
4. Saura Icons in Puttasing village



5. Saura Icons in Gunduruba village



Map of South Orissa showing Saura villages with paintings



14'10"
Earthen Platform
Hearth
Living Room
Cow Shed
Earthen Platform
Mortar
Wooden Platform
17'6
Door
Verandah
Verandah
Fowl-Pen
Pigsty
22'

House plan

Introduction

The earliest work on the Saura icons and the Saura tribe in general has been done by Verrier Elwin as early as 1950. His book *Religion of an Indian Tribe* (1955, Oxford) has influenced the later scholars to a great extent in their research on the art of the Sauras. My contact with the Saura wall paintings go back to 1977 in the scholarly company of Dr. Eberhard Fischer. We photographed and documented several Saura paintings in Puttasing, Seranga and Chandragiri area and included them in our book *Orissa Kunst und Kultur in Nordost Indien* (1980, Zurich). We renewed our visits to Chandragiri area in 1982 to assess the changes, and published our findings in the *Swiss Air Gazette* (1985, Zurich).



Several scholars from Orissa such as Dr. Nityananda Patnaik, Prof. Bhabagrahi Mishra, Prof. N.K. Beuria, Dr. Rabinarayan Dash, Dr. Jagannatha Dash and Sri Rajendra Prasad Prusty have published articles on Saura icons. A large portion of the book *Tribal Wall Paintings* (1991, Bhubaneswar) authored by Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra is devoted to the Saura pictographs.

Realising the importance and potential of the Saura icons, the Crafts Council of Orissa has programmed a detailed documentation project focusing on the Saura artists and their works with financial assistance from the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, Government of India. This monograph is part of the same project, that includes drawings by the Saura painters, videography on the life and art of the Sauras and also compiles an audio cassette on Saura music. The Crafts Council of Orissa plans to have several expositions of the Saura icons in which the drawings, videos, audios and this monograph could be presented together for better appreciation of Saura icons. The idea underlying is to highlight the creative efforts of the Saura painters and involve them in the design making process for production of craft items. This may open up employment opportunities for these tribal painters.

I express my gratitude to the Crafts Council of Orissa to have given me the privilege of heading this project. As a painter, I have derived the maximum pleasure in being with the Saura painters, living in their environs, talking to them, watching them paint, and learning a lot from their process.

I am grateful to Prof. R.P. Das, my colleagues Dr. B.K. Rath, Sri D.N. Rao, Sri Balakrishna Nanda, Sri Dillip Kumar Tripathy, Sri Ramahari Jena, and Sri Siba Panigrahi who have helped in several ways for the success of the project. I remember with pleasure the

assistance of friends and students, particularly of Sri Pradip Mohanty, and my son Sri Soubhagya who accompainied us on our Saura trips.

I owe a great deal to my friend and colleague, Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Director of the Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland who germinated in me the idea of documenting the Saura icons. I am obliged to my teacher, Prof. M.N. Das, the Chairman of the Crafts Council of Orissa, for his encouragement and guidance.

Last but not the least, I wish to record my sincere appreciation for Shri Manjit Singh, Harman Publishing House, New Delhi, for his cooperation in bringing out this monograph. Further I also like to put on record the efforts of Jehanara Wasi in seeing the manuscripts through the press.

DINANATH PATHY

1
The Country and the People

The Sauras are the most primitive and colourful among the major tribes of Orissa. Although they dwell in small numbers in all parts of the state, they are concentrated mainly in the districts of Ganjam and Koraput.

The Saura region begins with Taptapani Chandragiri area as one approaches from Berhampur on the Berhampur-R Udayagiri Road leading to Paralakhemandi. The road then stretches out to Gunpur which is the southernmost destination. This region comprising Paralakhemandi subdivision of Ganjam district has remained isolated from the coastal plains due to the long ranges of the Eastern ghats. But the road which runs through this region has carried urban influences and allowed them to infiltrate into isolated pockets. There are hundreds of Saura villages in this region which are spread all over the hill tops, slopes and terraced fields as well as in the valleys and plains. Of these however, approximately only sixty villages have painted houses. Although new villages have come up on both sides of the road, they are mostly devoid of painted houses. The



Gamang, a Saura chief in his traditional constumes



Saura Woman wearing wooden plugs

Christian missionary activities and counteractive Hindu chauvinism are playing havoc with the religious faith, customs, art and lifestyles of the Sauras. However, it is amazing that much of their art still survives.

The area is picturesque and lovely, with rising hills, fertile valleys and trickling streams. This comprises inaccessible ancient rock formations of the Vindhya ranges as well as plains with long stretches of paddy fields. During the rains, the dark clouds engulf the mountain peaks and in the summer the wild fire ravages the forests. The Saura country is simply captivating. Its variety and diversity has provided a complex cultural profile to the Sauras. The richness and antiquity of their art and culture, the beauty and creativity connected with them offer a very interesting study.

The word 'Saura' is spelt and pronounced variously as Saura, Sora or Saora. We have used the word 'Saura', which is more akin to the manner they themselves pronounce. The educated among them call themselves *savara*, which is the Sanskritised version of the word Saura.

The Sauras have a racial affinity with the Proto-Australoids and hold linguistic affinity with the South Munda division of the Austric language family. They have also developed a script which is known as *Saura Sompen*.

According to the 1981 Census, the Sauras number a little over three lakhs and seventy thousand. Economically as well as educationally they are very backward. Their

rate of literacy is only 14.47 per cent as against the state average of 34.23 per cent. This is because they are primarily argiculturists. About 50 per cent are agricultural labourers and 41 per cent are peasant cultivators. They cultivate the dry lands in the foothills and grow vegetables in small areas of their homestead land. The terraced land under *podu* cultivation is special to them. They are reputed to be the best terrace cultivators anywhere in the world.

Sauras find mention in ancient literature, history, inscriptions and legends. The *Savari* of the *Ramayana,* the *Jara Savara* of the *Mahabharata,* the Saura King Udayana of ancient inscriptions, the Indradyamna Visvabasu story connecting the Savara or Sauras with the Jagannatha Temple tradition show their links with religion, tradition and culture of Orissa.

The Saura villages are generally small. Even five to ten houses can make a village. On an average, a village may have thirty to forty houses. Large villages consist of several clusters of house settlements which are irregular. Traditionally every village on the hills has a fairly well defined boundary with stone piled walls running around which reflects their artistic sensibility. On the plains, one can also find wooden and bamboo barricades circumfencing the villages. Whereas, the small villages on plains have houses arranged on both sides of the path running across. At times, the houses are built on different levels of the hill slopes like their terraced fields.



Narrow lane in a Saura village on the hills



Piggery



View of a Saura village on the hills

Each village has a presiding deity and at times two deities, one female and one male known as Kitungsum or Gusadasum. They are represented through impressive carved wooden pillars which supposedly protects the village from evil spirits, diseases and epidemics. The shelter for the deities are built with large flat stones at one corner of the village or in the middle. Most of the shrines are empty. In some villages, one finds an open thatched structure resting on four pillars enclosing a raised earthen platform. From the centre of the roof emerges a pillar rimmed from bottom to top with a seated peacock. The deity is known as Langarsusm. In plain areas, the Jalia, a representation of Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped by the Sauras. The villages and the village sites have a long tradition haloed by legends and community memory. The village is sacred and the soil is sacred too which contains the last remains of the ancestors. The hills, forests, streams, fields and trees around the village are the places where the spirits reside. There are hundreds of these Gods and demi-Gods which are extremely important in the Saura pantheon and for whom the paintings are done on the wall.

The Saura houses are generally single-roomed and are built on raised grounds with a low roof. The walls are washed in red clay. The entrance door is generally plain. But we have noticed in hilly areas wooden doors and jambs which are carved. Brass eyelets and decorated nails are used in them. Inside the room covering almost half the space is a loft constructed on wooden beams. In the

Chandragiri area, the main pillar which supports both the roof and the loft has carvings of a pair of breasts. This is known as Jodisum or Sandhidevata representing the male and female principle and is of pro-creative symbolism. On the hills in Puttasing and Seranga areas the verandahs are as high as eight to ten feet from the street. This loft is used as a storage space for agricultural products packed in bamboo baskets and earthenware, clothes, ornaments as well as musical instruments. The hearth is placed underneath where the family sleeps. On the other side of the room beyond the loft on the floor is a mortar in which grain is husked with the help of pestles. Here adjacent to the wall is a long and narrow earthen platform on which water pots and cooked food are placed. The paintings are done on this wall. But sometimes also below the loft around the hearth which are difficult to view because of the dark interiors veiled with layers of smoke. A number of objects such as gourd, containers, baskets, umbrellas, etc. are hung from the roof. The gourds, baskets, pumpkins, maize, bunches of grain, certain ritual objects such as special clothes of ancestors and tutelaries and the sacred pot are generally hung against the wall where icons are painted.

The Sauras believe that in ancient times, their forefathers distributed the various hills of the Saura land on the basis of *birinda* or extended families. The extended family is the primary exogamous unit tracing its origin to a common ancestor. This unit is the *birinda* based on patrilineage. Within a *birinda*, the Sauras participate in major ritual occasions



A Saura youth at his string instrument



10. A Saura mother with her children

such as *guar* or second death ceremony and *kriya* or final death ceremony. A Saura woman belongs to her father's *birinda* even after her marriage. Of course, *birinda* is not equivalent to clan or *gotra* which obliterates distance in matters of exogamous rules. This is compared to the Hindu concept of *kutumva* or *sapinda*.

The Sauras are dark and are of average built and height. The womenfolk resemble the Andhraites and the Telugu-speaking South Orissan type. There is hardly any difference between plain Sauras and the Telugu farmer community living in Ganjam and Koraput districts. The traditional Saura male dress is a long loin-cloth about two metres long and one-fourth of a metre wide. This is worn as a loin cloth with the two decorated ends hanging at the front and the back giving the impression of a tail (*lanja*) by which they are sometimes known as Lanjia Saura. They also sport a turban with feathers. Women wear a short cloth which barely covers the knees. Saura women are fond of ornaments. They wear round wooden plugs, rings of brass and other metal ear rings, necklaces of mostly red beads, metal bangles and anklets. On the nose they put on metal tips, rings and pendants. They tie their hair in buns which project on the left side and on which they tuck hairpins of bell metal or silver. They have tattoo marks on the forehead which stretches on the nose line, cheeks and chin. The traditional costumes and ornaments of the Sauras have undergone a change and one rarely finds traditional dresses in the plains.

Saura men and women spend most of their time in the fields. So during the day the villages looks deserted. Their major occupation is agriculture. They rear chickens, pigs, buffaloes and nowadays in the plains, goats and cattle. *Handia,* the rice beer is their favourite drink. This is manufactured outside the village, preferably near a trickling stream. As one enters the Saura village, one can see isolated or groups of palm trees with pots hanging around the top trunks for collection of *tadi or* palm beer.

Saura festivals and ceremonies, in fact their whole life cycle, are intimately connected with agricultural operations. It starts with ploughing, seed mixing to sowing, reaping and harvesting. Before starting the agricultural operations, they propitiate the hill gods by offering liquor, goats and fowl and after the harvest, they also offer new crops like *kangu, jana, maka, kanduala, mandia,* etc.

The death rituals are quite elaborate and complicated. Depending on economic status, the rituals vary in temper. *Karanjini* (cremation) or *karja, iyalkup* (bone collection), *limma* (feast) and *guar* are considered important death rites. The *guar* ceremony marks the entry of the dead into the world of ancestors. The death ritual culminates with sacrifice of a buffalo. Then elaborate feastings and a ceremonial exchange of gifts is made. They believe that until this ceremony takes place, the spirit of the dead hovers round the village and remains unappeased.



Saura women and her family



Saura men observing a ritual



A Saura icon

2

Icons : Myth and Ritual

In primitive societies, the main occupation is survival and this is intricately linked with harnessing nature which is held in awe and admiration. The concept of nature extends into the unknown, unfathomed and dark world of spirits. The demystification of nature is the result of a long process of interaction and inference. This leads to the emergence of a cosmic phenomena which permeates the life of a primitive and which transforms, objectifies and becomes imperative in both life and society. This collective unconscious psyche takes shape in the archetypal myths and symbols and finds expression in art and rituals.

Rituals synchronise all the corresponding elements, physical as well as mental gestures, sounds, images, superstitions, beliefs and mysticism. Myths provide a context and its perpetuation is done through rituals. The archeytpal myths are the earliest attempts at articulating, rationalising and unravelling the mystery of the cosmic phenomena. Camouflaged in fantasy, they reflect the unconscious, fears, aspirations and dreams.

Magic is the basis of all rituals. The earliest attempts to create a mysterious environment is far beyond our comprehension. Symbolism carried in it the spirit of magic enlivened by mysticism, superstitions and beliefs.

Therefore like in most other primitive societies, image-making of the Sauras is intimately linked with their living pattern. It is primarily based on their faith in healing of diseases and appeasing spirits through creative expressions. Belief in supernatural deities or entities, close interaction with them and suffering as a result of their wrath is a common phenomena in primitive communities. But in Saura societies, the interaction between the Saura and their supernatural entities is quite intimate which results in paintings. The entities or spirits are of two kinds. One, the nature spirits which dwell in forests, fields, hills and streams and the other, the ancestral spirits which reside in the underworld. These spirits always make attempts to occupy ritualistic spaces, personify and live among Saura families. There are instances when Saura men and women have married tutelary spirits. These spirits convey their desires through dreams and in case of negligence cause untold sufferings. It is always believed that most of the diseases or afflictions are mainly caused due to the wrath of the supernatural entities. They are to be properly propitiated, respected and appeased and the best way to do this is to paint an icon for them inside the house. These ritualistic spaces in the paintings serve as temporary dwellings or rest houses in the living world. This belief brings about an intimate



A Bejuni evoking the spirits



A Bejuni interpreting the motifs painted on icons

relationship between the Saura and the spirits on the one hand, and the spirits and the icons, on the other.

Propitiating various spirits and deities for the welfare of the family, fields and the village is a very ancient tradition. These are solemnised at the family-level rituals and at the village-level rituals. In the Saura societies, the household head (*Idairmar*) propitiates the ancestral spirits and the village shaman or *kudan,* who are the high gods of the Saura culture, by painting icons for them. As far as the village-level ritual is concerned, the Sąuras worship icons of Sahibosums, Marnosums, Jammolsums, Sardasum, Earongsum and other village goddesses or Thakuranis. This has a parallel in the Hindu social system. The Sauras have a preoccupation with magic, incantation, charms and sorcery both as avenues of curing diseases and obtaining the blessing of gods and goddesses.

The fertility of the fields and the bumper harvest are the major concerns of the Sauras on which the entire economic structure rests. Similarly, the offering of the first reaped grains or first grown vegetables and fruits to deities who are responsible for the bumper crops is a must for the Sauras, which is done as a gesture of gratitude, to Labosum, Jemrakittung and Sidibiradi. On the contrary, if somebody utilises harvests of the natural resources without the permission of the concerned deity, illness is caused. Similarly, before carrying out forest activities, the forest deity Benasum is offered tobacco, failing which the deity feels insulted and causes illness.

One also has to draw icons for cure. This tradition is practised even in urban societies. Icons are painted for the occassion of first-eating ceremony which is known as *adurs*. The Sauras offer mango, mango stone, *kangu, kandula* and *kanda* to the icon before it is eaten in the family. Therefore drawing of icons associated with agriculture is another important ritual.

Icons of Darammaboi and Gadejanboi are painted for the safe birth of the child. It is believed that these deities assist the mother in person during the delivery of the child. When the milk of a mother dries up, the child suffers. To prevent this ailment, icons for Tutiyumsum (for mother's nipple) and Uraljungsum are drawn. Icons are also painted in honour of the maternal uncle and the other members of the family. The Anjuman icons which are also painted, signify the social and more humane aspect of the Sauras.

Icons have a major role in the mortuary rites or *guar* ceremony. Karnosum is an ancestral spirit which causes illness if not satisfied through an icon. The ancestral spirits have their friends and relations who together make a demand for icons. These spirits are regularly propitiated through the icons.

Icons are also painted for Kitungscem of Kitungyat. Unless this spirit is appeased, it puts a man into a trance driving him to ask for offerings on the way home from agricultural fields, making him possessed and immobile. It is also believed that the spirit has the power of



A procession with traditional musical instruments



A buffalo is led for sacrifice


A cock is sacrified before an icon

converting a man into a tiger or a tiger into a man. Therefore it is called the Paltadevta, or conversion deity.

There is another spirit called Karnyat which lives in between the sun and the moon. It causes smallpox if not propitiated through an icon.

The Sun God called Sedamar appears in dream sequences and drives people into a trance and makes them perform various unusual activities. To get rid of the wrath of this spirit, Sauras paint icons.

Kittuing and a few other spirits when in need of a servant, cause illness and demand an icon with the figure of a servant. There are a few spirits who occasionally suffer from isolation and loneliness and like to settle down within a family and demand an icon. It is also noticed that some spirits get tired while passing by the village, wish to rest, ask for an icon or else cause illness in the family.

During festive occasions, the Sauras paint icons in their houses. These are in the month of *Faguna* during Dolapurnima, in *Aswina* during Dasahara or in *Margasira* during Guruvara.

It is thus seen that icons play a major role in the life of the Sauras from birth till death and even beyond. It has grown out of the very basic structure of Saura life and social system. It is therefore imperative to study Saura icons from textual and contextual view points. The textual content of the icons are so mixed up with contextual references that it is almost impossible to isolate

one from the other. The life and environs of this world as well as the underworld is conceived on the physical as well as on the spiritual plane. This is punctuated always with the belief patterns, religious structure and myth phenomena. This seems quite feasible in the thought process but on the visual plane the human beings and the spirits are drawn alike and there is hardly any difference in the physical world and the underworld. Therefore, it is not always easy to read through the icon unaided. More often the *beju* and *bejuni* who function as media-possessed persons explain the meanings of different motifs of the icons as they appear to him or her. Therefore, interpretations and meanings vary. However, we like to group the icons in the following categories and assign them their thematic contents:

1. Icon for appeasing spirits (tutelary spirits, nature spirits, and other spirits of the underworld).
2. Icon for health, welfare (averting and curing illness, diseases, epidemics).
3. Icon for fertility and harvest (to increase the fertility of the soil, to produce good crops, offering of first-grown fruits, vegetables and grains).
4. Icon for child birth (for easy delivery).
5. Icon for the dead (mortuary ceremony).
6. Icon for welfare of the village (representing shrines and deities).



A Kothi with ritualistic implements before an icon



Sun, Moon and Ghost spirits in an icon

7. Icon for festive occasions (Dolapurnima, Dasahara and Margasira Guruvara).
8. Icon for those who have been abroad (working in the tea gardens of Assam).
9. Icon for marriage and birth anniversary (marriage of Kudanmaran to tutelary spirits and Anjuman paintings).

No doubt, the Sauras do paint icons for the purposes mentioned above. The themes of the icon have been mixed up to form a few prototypes. They also paint whenever they feel the necessity, sometimes inside and at other times outside their houses, which are devoid of spirit invocation. Any kind of pretext is enough to prompt a Saura to paint an icon. The spirits, gods, goddesses and deities are numerous and also multiplying. New gods are entering into the Saura pantheon. To cite an example, the Hindu God Gosain Mohaprabhu, if not appeased, causes illness in a Saura family.

3
The Saura Painters

The icons are generally drawn by the *kudan* or the sorcerer of the village. He is also known as *Ittalmaran*, the professional painter, and occupies a special position in the society. His profession is hereditary and he passes on his knowledge and techniques of painting icons to his son. Traditionally, the eldest son of the *Ittalmaran* assumes the responsibility from his father when the father becomes too old to paint. In absence of son, his own brother's son inherits the profession. There is a ceremony of investiture. *Buiya*, the village priest organises a ritual. The *kudan* sacrifices a buffalo and offers the meat along with liquor to the Sun God informing him about the new appointment. Interestingly, this has a striking parallel among the *Chitrakara*, the traditional painter's community at Puri in which the ceremony of investiture is an important ritual to accord the status of the Jagannatha temple *sevaka*, or the painter's servant. In the Saura area, the painters are few and they are in great demand. A painter normally works for a group of villages. When it becomes extremely difficult to find a painter, the head



Marka Savara of Gumma village is making sketches while his wife looks on



Jatina Savara, Rejintal

of the household or *Idaimaran* executes the painting.

In 1991, when we approached the Saura painters in Puttasing area and requested them to paint on paper, they were extremely reluctant. Firstly the idea to paint on a horizontally placed surface was not accepted. The painter, Maga Savara, aged about eighty, fixed the paper on to the wall and painted. Secondly, in the village Jaltar, the painters were not willing to show us what they would paint. With much persuasion, the papers and paint were accepted by them and they promised to return the paintings by evening. The village was again visited in February 1993. But unfortunately Maga Savara had died by then.

In the village Kerba, the painters were reluctant to cooperate with us. They avoided us when we approached them.

When we reached the village Perpang, it was evening. We enquired about the painter Sambaru Muli. He had gone to the neighbouring village to sell firewood. We followed him and requested him to return to the village and paint for us. We paid for the cost of his fuel wood. He readily returned and painted for us with the help of a kerosene lamp because by then it was already dark. We affered him a micro tipped pen and a sketchbook. He could not handle this pen properly and justified that the *kalam* was running faster than his mind. Obviously, he was used to paint with a brush made of palm-twig which was not as fast on mud wall as was the micro-

tipped sketching pen on a drawing paper.

We asked Sakuntala Savara, a woman painter in the Antarjholi village, to paint for us. She accepted readily. She was the wife of a school teacher and had studied up to Class VII. She said she had to do a little bit of practice before she painted for us. She took out a slate from her son's school bag, went to the inner room where an old painting was still hanging on the wall and started copying the motifs. She even proudly showed her drawings and asked whether she could be given a sketchbook. She had the same difficulty like Jamuru Savara in handling the micro-tipped pen. Thus she painted with a sable hair brush. After a lapse of two years in 1993, we again approached Sakuntala to draw for us. By then she had shifted to a new house leaving her old house to her younger brother-in-law. Her new house had no paintings on the wall. She asked us for her drawings and only after getting acquainted could she draw on the slate.

We reached the village Seranga quite late. Darkness had already descended on this tiny village. We were given the information that three painters were about to return to their own village situated on the nearby hill separated by a deep valley. Probably they were engaged in the construction of a house in Tarbaul village. They came to the bunglow where we were waiting for them. We lighted candles and the painters Kantaru Buiya, Kedaru Savara and Rasana Raita painted for us.



Sania Gamang of Alangada village painting on a paper



Sevati Savara of Antarjholi village painting on a paper



Nakula Savara of Marichaguda village painting on a paper

Some painters like Jatina Savara and Lakshmana Savara while painting dripped colours on the paper and immediately tried to erase it, while other painters like Sudaru Savara did not bother too much and in the course of their work gained control and did not commit the same mistake.

We went to Jagannathapur in search of Rupa Savara who had earlier attended several workshops and a demonstration programme at Bhubaneswar and Delhi. Rupa was in his *bagada* (fields). We met him there. He recognised us and greeted us well. But he said he had given up painting and was doing agriculture since this was paying more. He refused to oblige us with his drawings.

In the village Marichaguda, the painter Nakula Savara was assisted by two or three other villagers who did not belong to the profession. These people took a fancy to his painting and offered to help him, to which he readily agreed and the painting was finished in phases.

We requested Kurpani Savara, a woman painter, to paint a full picture on one of the exterior walls of a house in the village. The painter was initially reluctant because that was Thursday, the day of the Goddess Lakshmi. We told her we had come from Bhubaneswar and would like to watch her paint. She discussed the matter with Lakshmi *bejuni* and shortly after, she agreed. She went to the village pond to take a bath, changed into fresh clothes, brought a woman assistant to paint

the ground with red ochre colour and later reached the spot. From the neighbouring house she collected a brass *thali*, a *ghee* lamp, a small packet of vermilion powder, incense sticks and a terracotta container with burning charcoal to burn resin. She said she would not eat anything before the painting was finished but had two or three glasses of tea from the nearby tea shop. While executing painting, her cousin (younger brother's son) was allowed to remind her of the motifs she might paint and eventually she left a large area on the wall for her cousin to paint if she felt exhausted. She said her cousin had learned from her and there was no difference whether she painted or he. But we observed that her cousin was a little fast, sketchy, repetitive and unmindful. Kurpani Savara is a prolific painter. She is in her sixties. In 1993 we met her again. She complained of loss of her eyesight but volunteered to paint for us this time at the entrance of her house.

We met Marka Savara, the painter, outside the village. He was wearing an old military coat and a short *gumchha* and was going to the village shrine to offer oblations. We requested him to paint for us. He willingly gave his consent. He returned from the shrine and started painting on paper. He invited his wife. She came and sat beside him. Her role was more of a promoter, appreciating his drawings.

After meeting and talking to several Saura painters, we realised that they are conscious of their creative



Patra Savara of Perpang village painting on a paper



Kedaru Gamang of Angda village posing before his painting



Kurpani Savara of Antarjholi painting while Bejuni is identifying the motifs



Shakuntala Savara of Antarjholi villages, drawing sketches in a note book

potentials, as if the art of painting is natural to them. Most of them paint impulsively dictated by some spirit. The painters of the hills consider painting sacred and mysterious, whereas in the plains, the painters are more open and painting is like any other ordinary activity to them.

The painters are in great demand in the Saura society. They function within a painter-customer relationship or in a sort of *jajamani* system that exists in folk societies. The painter has the right to appropriate the objects that are offered to the spirits at the time of the propitiation ceremony. He has a share in the rice, the *handia* or rice beer, the fowl and sometimes in the goat sacrificed on the occasion.

But the painting activity is getting more and more commercialised. Now in the plain areas, the painter is called in whenever there is need to do some kind of painting. The occasion could be a marriage, *vara* or *osha*. His role has changed from a priest painter to that of an interior decorator. Nowadays the women painters with creative zeal are taking up the assignments. In the Padmapur area, the three women painters are very active. They are in a great demand for Lakshmi Puja and other Hindu rituals.

The Saura painter is the most knowledgeable person in the society who has the ability to delve deep into the world of supernatural and ancestral spirits. He is a well informed person, having detailed information about super-

natural beings, their characteristics, physical features and the nature of troubles they can create for people. He possesses the magical power to transform the unseen spirits into visible forms. When any member in the family falls ill, the *kudan* is consulted to find out the causes of the illness. The Sauras believe that health and continuity of life are natural, whereas disease, sickness and death are unnatural. They consider natural phenomena as the handiwork of the malevolent spirits who are to be appeased by offerings. The *kudan's* most difficult task is the identification of the spirit. The commonest method of identifying the spirit is by rubbing white rice grains kept in a winnowing fan and uttering incantations while searching for the spirit. As soon as the spirit is detected, the *kudan* informs the family members about the spirit and prescribes the paintings of icons as the sure method of curing illness.



Makara Savara of Gunduruba village



Icons in Puttasing area

4

Techniques and Materials

Painting the icon is an act of ritual divination. The painter gets possessed with the spirit in the process. In the village a painter said that it is the *devata* inside his body frame who does the painting. Most of the painters maintained that they were being guided by some strange spirits who live in their villages, hills and forests. Therefore sacredness is associated with the work of painting. The best time to start painting is in the morning. After bathing, on an empty stomach, the painter invokes the village gods and other deities who reside in nearby forests and hills, including ancestral spirits within the village boundary. He then reaches the house where the icon is to be drawn. A small offering is conducted near the wall. Depending on the financial ability of the house owner, the offerings vary from rice beer to fowls and goats. Icons for the ancestral spirits are drawn underneath the loft. These are usually small and brief. Icons for the welfare of the village are decided in an assembly of the elders. Often the religious head of the village has the final say in this matter. In the village Antarjholi, we

watched the painter Kurpani Savara draw a square *mandala* on the ground with *muruja* stone powder close to the wall prepared for icons. She placed a brass *thali* containing a *ghee* lamp, incense sticks, *arua* or unboiled rice, *sindura* or vermilion and a charcoal placed in a terracotta cup along with brushes. She quietly invoked the spirits, bowed down to touch the earth with her forehead and then began to paint. In this village, the painter demanded rice beer. He made three leaf cups and filled them with rice. He then poured rice beer into each cup, sprinkled a little bit of it on to the wall where the painting had to be done, poured a little on the ground and then gulped the rest before starting the painting.

The painter conceives the total layout of the painting. He visualises the entire composition in accordance with the occasion and decides the format suitable to the wall space available. Unlike the *Chitrakara* who demarcates the painted area and the available space into bands and compartments, the Saura painter starts to draw from a point within his conceptualised wall space and builds up his vision gradually spreading out in all directions. The painter first tries to capture the spirit or the ghost identified as the cause of the illness or disease in his painting. It seems that the entire painting is a kind of revelation and actualisation of the "cause" in a visual form. The painting arena is a theatre stage where different characters appear at the will of the painter. They are made to appear all of a sudden. The starting point in a painting could be from the top or bottom or even from



Painter preparing the wall with a coat of red ochre



Painting with the help of a twig using rice liquid

the middle. Usnally the house owner's wife, obviously under the *kudan's* instructions, has to give a red clay wash over the wall space where the painting is to be done.

Since the paintings are done over and again on the same spot in the house, both the house owner and the painter seem to have become familiar with the proceedings of the painting. At times there is no confirmity with the conceptualised wall space done with red clay and the actual paintings. Parts of the painting spill over the red-ochre painted area over the bare wall.

The general format of the painting is in the form of a house, like a *kothi* in a rectangular or square space. At times one finds the top frame covered by a conical roof like in a thatched house. Peacock is drawn on top of the house and on either sides is drawn the sun and the moon. In fertility paintings, the painter conceives the format of a landscape to show agricultural operations.

We record below the proceedings of the paintings done by the painter Kurpani Savara in the village Antarjholi. She had three brushes of palm twig in three colours—white, yellow and blue. First she drew in white followed by lines in blue and yellow respectively. She started the painting with the shrine on the extreme top right of the red ochre area at ten in the morning. She drew the shrine in the shape of a thatched house. She explained it was a temple for Babudevata. She painted a peacock on the top and a tree emerging on the left corner of the temple. Six figures were painted inside the

shrine, three on the top, of which two carried a third one who was a deity in the palanquin. The lower panel depicted gods on an elephant and on a horse with an attendant in between. She also painted a *beju* inside the conical shape of the shrine with two fowls, a comb and a mirror. She painted three more shrines on to the left of the shrine, all placed on one base line. These were the Lada's shrines, Khilamunda and Elandgi. The roof of the shrine of Lada has four concave shapes with a tree rising from the left corner. She divided the shrine into two horizontal compartments with the help of a decorated border. On the top compartment, she painted three vertical figures with a cock and a goat. In the lower compartment, she painted six dancing figures. The arrangements of figures in the Khilamunda's shrine was almost similar to that of the first shrine execpt that the top of the shrine was truncated. The other shrine devoted to Elandgi was again divided into two horizontal compartments with a decorative border. Inside the upper compartments, she painted three standing deities and in the lower one five dancing figures. On the roof of this shrine she painted two semi-circular curves and at about 12 noon, she painted combs, mirrors, scorpions, and lizards on top of these shrines.

At about 12.30 of the noon she started drawing human figures. Below the shrines she drew a figure holding a fowl named Lauguda. The other figures close by were meant to help Lauguda with the offerance water, while the former would do the sacrifice. She



(From left) The Shrines of Lada, Khilamunda and Elandji


Offerings before the icons

painted a goddess holding lotus flowers in both hands named Manikesvari Ma. The Goddess Manikesvari is the village deity of the Sauras in the plains. The fourth figure on a horse with bunches of flowers emerging from his head is the Naarasonunji *devata*. She then painted a potter balancing pots on his shoulder below this shrine. Around 1 p.m., Kurpani started painting the tree with its wide spreading branches. The branches were wavy and decorative. She then went on to embellish the leaves one by one in white. Thereafter she painted a row of *devatas* in a procession all in white. Kurpani said that Fula, the *bejuni* of the village worships these gods and goddesses on Fridays and Tuesdays.

By 2.30 in the afternoon the painting was complete. The painter prepared *chinipani,* a squash with sugar on *jhuna* resin smoke in a charcoal container. Fula, the *bejuni* of the village, arrived at this moment. Kailasa fetched a fowl. Another woman, Lakshmi who had earlier assisted Kurpani with the coating of red ochre joined the group. The group then started invoking the spirits and gods. They threw rice in all directions. Lakshmi started uttering incantations holding the glass of squash. Fula also joined her. They both poured the sugar water on the *kothi* inviting several *devatas*. Kurpani lit the lamp. The group which was seated facing the painting started sprinkling rice to the cock which was allowed to eat from the offerings. They all said it was a good omen. This continued for four to five minutes. Kailasa then asked for the help of another young man called

Subasa, who held the legs of the cock. Kailasa with a sharp knife separated the head from the body. Kurpani picked up the head and put it on the icon where Babudevata was painted. She then poured a little squash on the severed head of the cock. Kailasa got hold of the dead fowl and retreated. Kurpani also left for the nearby tea shop to get refreshed. Then a strange event took place. Fula and Lakshmi started convulsing in a trance. The spasms changed into violent movement, with their heads and body moving from side to side and from front to back. The crowd shouted *devata lagila*—they are possessed by the spirits. They started dancing and then retreated to their homes. Somebody suggested bringing two glasses of *mahuli* (*mahua* beer). After this was served to them, they were pacified.

We have also watched Saura painters in Chandragiri, Puttasing and Seranga areas. The process of rendering a painting is almost similar.

The painter begins to paint while standing, but when he proceeds from top to bottom, he has to bend his body and finally finishes with sitting on the ground. But to paint underneath the loft he has to obviously squat on the floor.

The materials required for the painting are simple and available in the locality. The red ochre used for the background is obtained from the red clay. In plain areas Sauras buy *geru* or *dhau* available in the village markets. This is mixed with water and smeared over the wall with the help of a cloth. The major pigment for the



Painting a shrine in the shape of a pidha temple



Preparing a brush for painting

icons is white which is obtained either from rice, *suan*, ash, chalk or lime. Both rice and *suan* are soaked in water and pulverised on a *sila pathara* or *robana* (domestic stone crusher) to make it in the form of a paste or liquid for the purposes of painting. We noticed that chalk sticks with which the school children write on slates are crushed, powdered, soaked in water and made into a liquid. Also betel lime is used for painting. But these are for an instant use quite prevalent in the plains.

Besides white, chrome, yellow (yellow orpiment), ultramarine blue and black are also used to heighten the visual effect of the icons. This is a modern innovation. We have seen that *alta* pink, normally painted by the young women on their feet in folk societies, is also used on the icons. The Saura painters buy the *haritala* yellow in the form of stone tablets from the village markets. The ultramarine is available in packets of indigo ordinarily used by the washermen. This is known as *dhobha neli* or washermen's blue. Glue is never mixed in these colours.

Brushes are generally made out of *khejur* palm twigs. The end of the stick is beaten by the painter while brushing the teeth to make it fibrous. Portions of *phula, chhanchuni* or broomstick is used as a brush. It has a hairy end and is preferred by the painters. The painters often tie cloth at the tip of a bamboo twig and use it as the brush for painting. Nowadays in the plain areas, the Saura painters have resorted to company made sable and squirrel hair brushes. The painters neither use scale nor any other geometrical instruments for their work.

5

Stylistic Features and Design Concepts

After visiting about sixty villages with painted houses, talking and interacting with Saura painters and having studied their paintings, we have come to the conclusion that the paintings could be grouped into four categories based on their stylistic variations. Each group is identified with a village, centrally located in the area. The group or the style is named after this village. Thus we have four styles, such as 'Puttasing,' 'Seranga,' 'Padmapur' and 'Mohana. Puttasing and Padmapur styles belong to the Koraput district, while the Seranga and Mohana styles come under the jurisdiction of Ganjam district. Although we have identified Padmapur and Mohana and named the styles after these two villages, they do not have painted houses. We would like to further divide these four groups into two sectors, the villages on plains like Mohana and Padmapur. The hill styles retain most of their primitive quality in composition and rendering of figures, while the artists in the plains have imbibed a



Icons of Mohana area



Icons on paper by Sevati Savara of Antarjholi village. Three shrines at the top with procession at the bottom

host of urban influences. In the plain areas there is constant interaction with Saura and folk artists and with the change of the Saura's religious customs and beliefs, the paintings tend to be loose and out of bounds of Saura iconography. The repertoire in the plains accept Lakshmi Puja motifs and Oshakothi paintings of South Orissa. Quite early, the Saura painters in the hill areas had also incorporated motifs like bicycles, motor cars and aeroplanes. But these had long since been accepted, accommodated and made into their own without causing the slightest visual imbalance contrary to the adaptations in the plains.

With the change of repertoire, the paintings in the plains are slowly transformed from archaic Saura icons to loose narrative and decorative ones. We have also noticed that in these areas more Saura women are taking to the painting profession like their counterparts in peasant folk societies. No wonder that in the near future the Saura icons will replace Lakshmi Puja paintings. The reverse could also be possible.

These four styles of Saura icons do not create water tight compartments. There is constant interaction between these groups. It is easy to find common motifs which are the basics on which the iconographic structures have been built. Along with this, there are also glaring dis-similarities which have prompted us to group them separately. In the following pages we have made an attempt to project the stylistical features of each group.

Padmapur

The Padmapur style of painting is mostly the transitional paintings between the Sauras and folk paintings done by the women during festivel occasions. Shrines of tribal and folk deities occupy smaller niches within the broad format. The miniature shrines are invariably squarish but occasionally topped with conical and concave shapes. The backgrounds of the miniature shrines are filled in with dots which make the shrines conspicuous and distinguishable from the rest which are left plain. In the village we noticed the entire painting rendered with dots. The other remarkable feature of this painting is the motifs of scorpions and animals which are painted on the top of each shrine. These are also called *devatas* or spirits. In the village Nairaguda, we came across in addition to the miniature shrines, small conical shapes both within the miniature shrine arena as well as outside it. These conical shapes are empty niches for the deities who may occupy the space at their will later. These niches resemble the miniature portable shrine being brought into these villages by wandering temple priests. The wall painting in the village has dots scatterd all over the background space. These dots have been made with finger tips in simple pyramidal forms resembling the *dhanasinsa* (rice heap) symbol of Lakshmi Puja paintings. In the paintings drawn on paper by Patra Savara of Perpang village, we notice shrines with trifold arches topped by *amalaka* and *kalasa*. In another painting by the same artist, the shrines have been converted into



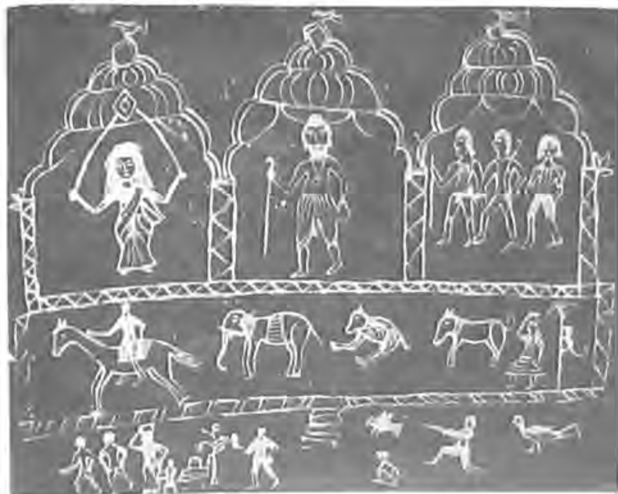
Icons on paper by Shambaru Muli of Perpang



Icons on paper by Patra Savara of Perpang village



Icons on paper by Shambaru Muli of Perpang village



Icons on paper by Patra Savara of Perpang village

apartments with tile roofs. The painter has also imitated the cloth *pandal* arrangement of "tent decorators" put up in villages for marriages and political functions. These decorations are influenced by Muslim architectural motifs and have come from Calcutta. It is equally interesting to observe scenes from the *Ramayana*, like Rama, Lakshmana and Sita marching into the forest and Rama hunting the golden deer. Along with these paintings of Krishna, Yasoda and married couples, bears are also painted in different compartments. After seeing these motifs, one is reminded of the Oshakothi paintings of South Orissa.

Painter Shambaru Muli draws the miniature shrines like small single chambered *pidha* temples with the sun and moon dotting the sky above. He has also imitated the *parabha* or *prabha* arch, a feature of the classical brass icons of Orissa. *Prahba* is a semi-circular arch placed on two decorated pillars. It is also Likely that Shambaru has seen the Durga Puja festival in Cuttack and these *prabhas* have been inspired by *medha* (pavilion designs). In this area along with icon paintings, we have seen Lakshmi Puja paintings with motifs of footprints, lotus, mace, conch, disc and swastika. The lotus is drawn in profile with photographic perspective petals going up and down. In this area the painters draw figures of Mangala with flower decorated pots on their heads standing unlike the Oshakothi Mangala which is seated in lotus posture. The painters have imitated the *Thakurani-handi* (pot for the goddess) being carried by

media-possessed women in *Thakurani Jatra* at Berhampur. The impetus for this motif could be the women processionists who carry decorated lights on their heads in marriage and temple processions.

In and around Perpang, the figures tend to be naturalistic and the inspiration is from printed oleographs. Patra Savara has attempted adding coiffure to his figures. There are details like eyes, nose and mouth on the face and shades on the drapery. He is also careful in painting the deer with dots, house roofs with tile marks, house steps, snakes with scales and horses with hairy bodies. Shambaru Muli, like Sevati Savara, is fond of decorated motifs, conical hill shapes, *jali* patterns, meanders, flowers and foliage. His *Rishi* figure with bulging belly holding a rosary in the right hand and Kamandalu in the left, stretched out on an *asabadi* (stick), though not superb as a piece of drawing but as a fine sample of mimicry has no parallel in the Saura icons. His snakes are always drawn with raised hoods ready to strike. The introduction of the potters' wife, with pots on her head following her husband is an innovation of painter Sambaru. The potter's wife, Kumbharuni, is wearing a loose skirt, blouse and an *odhani*. Along with gunman and hunter, the same painter has also drawn a large figure, which he claims is Bhima with a *Katua* (wooden spade). Shambaru Muli's paper drawing could be a portion of an Oshakothi painting of South Orissa mentioned above.



Icons on wall in Perpang village



Icons on wall in Alangada village

Puttasing

The Saura icons of Puttasing area are distinguishable by their large rectangular formats painted either horizontally or vertically on the wall. The painted area is invariably enclosed by a decorated border all around rendered with hatching lines, conical wavy lines or *jali* patterns. Four corners of these borders are decorated with circular motifs resembling flowers. In Gunduruba and Jaltar villages one finds rows of monkeys running on the top of the upper frame of the painting. Below the bottom line of the format different kinds of animals like leopards, deers, porcupines, bears, bullock carts, bicycles and automobiles occupy the space. The space within the borders are sliced into horizontal bands with rows of dancers, hunters, gunmen, processionists, priests, worshippers, *beju* and *bejuni* scenes from everyday life and animals. At times, within the large format of the painting is a central compartment focussing the attention on the spirit. In Gunduruba village, we noticed three vertical compartments within the bordered space each with a smaller square shrine on the upper portions. Gasaru Savara of Jaltar village paints four square icons in close juxtaposition, two on the top and two below each with similar motifs. On another occasion, Gasaru paints four square icons, three at the top and one below, the remaining portion filled with birds, animals, hunters and other scattered motifs. Sablute Savara leaves a space around the central niche to show the environ with several motifs packed to the inch. His icons are

crowded with innumerable figures as if stenciled in white against the red ochre background. Although in one or two paintings in Rejintal, we find the top of the icon rendered with conical roof, the Saura icons of Puttasing area have also flat tops.

Jatina Savara of Rejintal village gives us interesting motifs of duelas, with bows and arrows and with axes. Sudaru Savara of the Puttasing style draws hunters carrying the catch, a porcupine and a wild cat, varieties of bullock carts, chariots, man devoured by a tiger and a man and woman copulating. The painters of Puttasing area like icons crowded with a large number of paintings. The figures are elongated and angular. The dancing figures of Kedaru Savara of Tarigi village standing in a row with hands clasped together make interesting geometrical patterns. Maga Savara repeats his human figures all over the icons in rows. His paintings look like a printed textile. Maga joins two triangular forms tip to tip to make the torso. He then draws thin lines for legs, feet, arms, hands, neck and a dot for the face. To draw a horse, Maga places his human torso horizontally. The neck and the tail of the horse issue forth from this torso going up and down on both ends in semi-circular curves. The elephant has a squarish body with a thin trunk and a tail. The monkeys have unusually long legs, walk with raised tails on top and side frames of the icon. The peacocks have spread out plumes. Interestingly, Maga fills the background of the icons with dots and loop shapes. Laba Savara of Alangada prefers a plain background. His



Icons on wall in Gundaguda village.



Laba Savara



Icons on paper by Bhimasen Jani of Madhuraamba village



Alijor Dalabehera of Lakarjan village

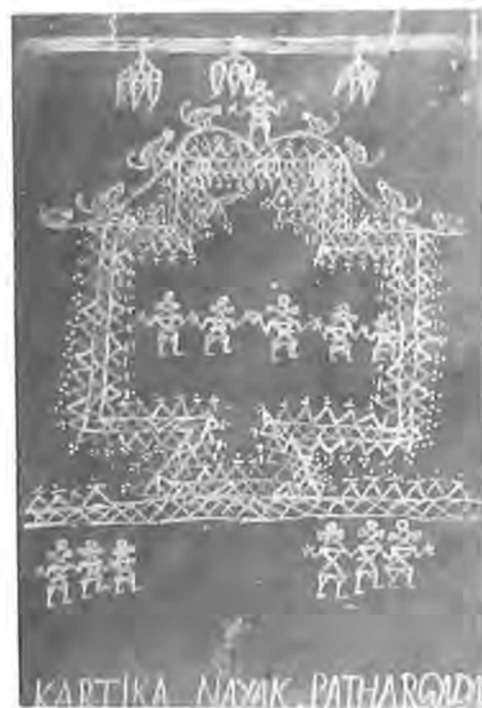
elephants have oval shaped bodies with long bending trunks and short tails. He has a hunting scene well conceived where a hunting dog chases a sambar which runs for life followed by hunters with spears, axe and stick. Similarly, the procession of the village goddess on the uppermost panel is imaginatively drawn. The goddesses are carried in an open palanquin preceded by a priest with offerings and followed by drummers, pipers, *singa* blowers and shaft bearers. The entire painting is a dedication to the village Goddess where dancers, women with offerings on their heads, men with offerings balancing on shoulders, elephants, men with umbrellas, are all marching to the shrine. Susanta Lima of Puttasing village tries to be naturalistic in this hunting icon. In the four sequences of the icon, the painter has depicted various hunting sequences. The catch being carried out in the first row, hunters following a boar with aiming gun, bow, axe and aided by a hunting dog in the second. The third row depicts a procession scene. The bottom row, widest of the three, has three musicians, one beating a drum, the other a *changu* and the third one piping a *mahuri*. His painting does not fit into the Puttasing style and is a deviation from geometrical structuralisation.

Indanga Savara who was serving in the army has painted a big clock below the central shrine, taken from his army life. On either side of the clock are soldiers with raised guns paying a salute to the spirit inside the shrine. At the bottom of his painting, he has painted a

row of health visitors who have come to the village to treat the patients. The dress of the health visitor has been copied from the female nurses in a hospital.

Mohana

Paintings documented ten or eleven years ago by us feature an archaic quality in the icons. These paintings have conical roofs on the top with borders around. Borders are double-lined with rows of hill motifs like in the Puttasing area. Each corner of the border has a circular flower motif. Monkeys walk on the slopes of the icon. The sun and moon flank the sky space above the icon. The spirit is painted under the conical arch seated on a chair with two attendants. In the square space one finds rows of dancers and in one of the paintings an animal being led for sacrifice. Peacocks, cocks, elephants and horses with riders are painted outside the border. Although the earlier Mohana icon gives the feeling of archaic quality, the present ones are clumsy motifs rendered in a casual manner without structured placements. The figures have been scattered over the pictorial space. In general, the paintings tend to be more naturalistic with anatomical features. Bhimasen Jani of Madhuraamba has almost painted a colonial style forestscape. A row of trees with foliage, a man wearing a short *dhoti* and a sleeveless *banian* holding an axe is followed by his wife in a sari. Of course, this depiction of Saura costumes is in conformity with present day dress habits. Animals such as the tiger, elephant, bull, dog and birds like the peacock, duck and flying sparrow dot in the space. Of



Icons on paper by Kartika Nayaka of Rodasankha village



Icons on paper by Kantaru Buiya of Tuburuda village



Icons on paper by Meghanada Savara of Gumma village

course, the presence of a fish and an umbrella speak of its earlier thematic contents. In a similar format is another painting by Bhimasen which reproduces word book motifs like deer, mango, bucket, hills, crane, tiger, house, mouse, etc.

Another artist, Kartika Nayak has produced paintings like that of Bhimsen. The paintings of Kartika Nayaka of Podasankha is a landscape with a temple. The temple is a modern version of the house painted for the ghost spirit in Puttasing and Seranga areas. Instead of a conical roof it has a flat one with creepers flowing on either sides like a bow. The monkeys run over the branches to the centre where the ghost spirit is standing. The border is double-lined with cross patterns in between. On both sides of the border are conical hill shapes. But these hill shapes resemble more the Lakshmi Puja *Jhotis* symbolising heaps of paddy topped by *bengei* or finger prints. Five deities are enshrined in the temple with devotees approaching. In the distance is a range o' hills with the rising Sun. A stream emerges and flows below. A farmer is ploughing the field. These kinds of landscapes are taught as drawing lessons in schools in this area.

The painter Mina Jani of Taramala has a different approach. Instead of a single shrine, he has opted for three shrines, one with a conical roof, the other with a half circular one and the third, a total conical space. Enkana Savara of Jagannathapur prominently portrays a

chariot, an uncommon feature in the entire Saura repertoire. Abhimanyu Karji of Patharagada renders his paintings in a sketchy manner. Radhamohan Savara has formidable depictions with rectangular divisions placed one above the other in close proximity to a shrine flanked by the sun and moon. As usual the motifs of horse riders, people carrying paddy and fruits on balances, stag, elephant, snake and lizard are loosely painted at the bottom of the shrine. Duini Gamang of Kapakhala lays emphasis on the sun motifs which occupies the centre of the painting with fish pond, elephant and ploughing scene arranged arbitarily.

The main focus of Mohana paintings is on the theme of fertility and these mostly depict agricultural scenes. This format is loosely structured. Prominent among the motifs are the pair of bullocks ploughers, elephant, peacock, sun, moon and a shrine. Cock, hen, chicks and fish aue frequent motifs. The Mohana style does not entertain pictorial compartments within the broader format. There is neither vertical nor horizontal bands dividing the pictorial space.

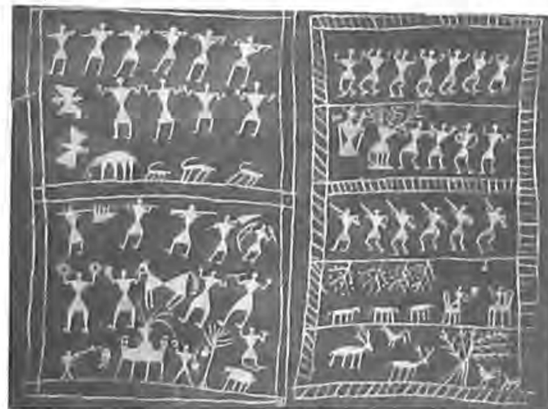
Seranga

The Saura icons of Seranga area have retained the archaic values inspite of modern influences. The motifs like shrines topped with peacocks, monkeys, automobiles, elephants and hunting scenes occupy places of significance in the paintings.

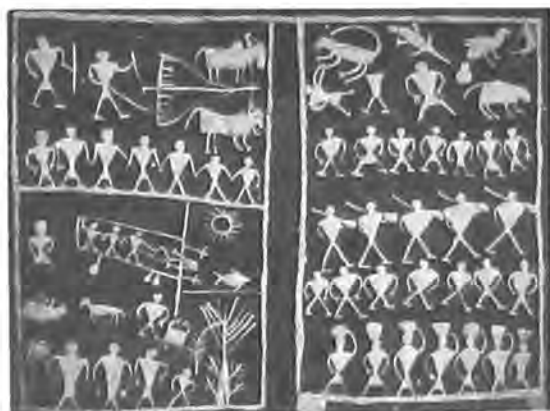
Marka Savara of Gumma village divides the pictorial

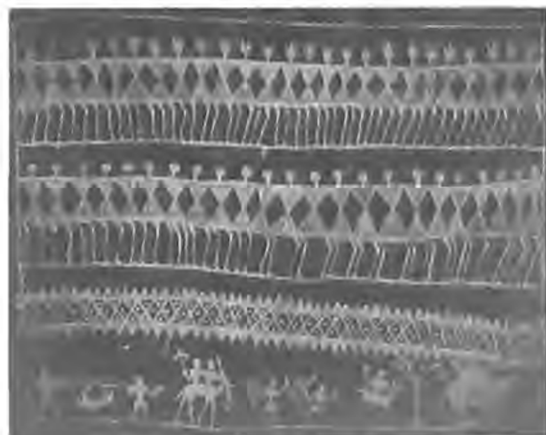


Icons on paper sy Rasana Raita of Tarbaul village



Icons on paper by Marka Savara of Gumma village





Icons on paper by Kedaru Gamang of Angda village

space into two vertical formats. Each division is further sliced into horizontal bands with rows of figures in geometrical formations. At times, instead of making horizontal bands the human figures as well as palm trees, stags, peacock and snake are let loose within the vertical. Kantaru Buiya also uses the rigid structurisation within square formats and tree renderings.

Kantaru Buiya also divides the space into vertical formats, where the figures are loosely rendered. Sunata Buiya, on the other hand, follows a standard format square/rectangular depicting a shrine with motifs of motor car, cycle, train and scooter beyond the shrine. Placement of the sun, moon and a pair of peacocks is on the top of the shrine. Erendu Gamang of Sitriguda has a format like that of Sunata Buiya but the figures which are generally scattered at the bottom of the shrine are painted on both sides.

Sania follows the same method of not painting fiugres out side the border. In this painting he had depicted copulating snakes and rows of figures seated on chairs with a table inbetween them. Rasana Buiya divides his rectangular icon into four square spaces and fills in with motifs not organised in rows depicting riders on horses, danceres, agricultural operation, worship at the village shrine, bicycle, motorcar and men carrying banana on balances.

In the village Angda we noticed on the wall a large shrine flanked by smaller shrines. The style of the danc-

ing figures are well structured, the blank spaces in between the torsos of the dancers forming be-hive motifs, the lgs are long and thin. Monkeys walk on the top frame from either sides with two symmetrical snakes forming many patterns. The lizards are unusually placed vertically outside frames. This icon has striking similariy with the paintings of Sania and Kantaru. Kedaru Gamang of the same village Angda paints similar icons with large and smaller shrines, his paintings have geometrical patterened dancers in rows, long lizards, without legs, monkeys on the top frame walking from either sides with many snakes, men seated an chairs, bicycles, motorcars and aeroplane. Kedaru interestingly stretches his imagination a little futher to show a bridge under the motor cycles and motor car. His rows of processionists with hunters carrying bows, arrows, axes, swords and spears are marching with determined steps, following men on elephants, horse etc. The painter has also introduced flower plants, palm trees, and a row of flying sparrows. In some of the paintings in this area we have bee hives hanging from the top frames.

The human figures of Kedaru Gamang painted on paper though structured is a little bulky with details of fingers on the palms. Similarly the painter had tried to elaborate the motorcar with gears and break, the *mahi* earth leveler with details of the comb. It seems that within these few years he has changed from thin figures to bulky ones from graphical structurisation to naturalistic farms.



Icons on wall in Tolana village



Icons on wall in Tolana village

Further Kedaru Gamang depicts motifs like ploughing with yoked bullock, motor car man being devoured by tiger and the taddy palm tree.

The icons of Sunata Buiya are simple with lines of uniform thickness looking away and open. His borders are are styled with four corner round motifs. The most stirking motif is the elephant which is thin and natural.

The icon of Rasana Buiya has two equal vertical formats topped by hills four on one and two on another with. Peacocks perching on the hill tops with Sun and Moon filling the sky space in between. Palm trees also emerge from between the gaps and from the top of the hill. On the right side icon bee hives hang from the top and middle frames. Each icon is divided into low bands with motifs depicting the sacrifice of a goat in the village shrine, priest conducting the sacrifice, hunter, riders on elephants horses with monkeys, cocks, gummen men marching in a row, dancers and musicians. The figures are well structured.

The analysis reveals that the Seranga style is well structured with a well balanced composition. Nature is amply depicted. The monkeys, snakes, lizards, peacocks, automobile bullock carts are imaginatively drawn. The borders of the icons are simple.

Conclusion

The Saura Icons are drifting away from their contextual significance. Although they are still put to ritualistic uses, their contents are rapidly changing. Saura painters have shown tremendous adoptability to changes by incorporating even bicylces, motor cars, aeroplanes in their paintings. But the recent changes show a deterioration of basic aesthetics as well as functional structure and the idea of a house for the Ghost spirit has been thrown into winds. Alongwith the change in the repertoire, even the painters from non tribal villages have taken to painting. It seems in near future the Saura icons will loose all their primitive and iconic value.

With the introduction of aleopathic medicines as a healing system, the traditional method of curing diseases and warding off evils through painted icons have been given up. With the installation of Jagannatha as the supreme deity of Savaras in a newly constructed temple at the town of Koraput, the traditional belief in the Ghost spirit is shaken.

Framed calender picture of gods and goddesses now adorn the interiors of Saura houses. The concept of superior or lesser gods have now entered the minds of the Sauras. They have started believing that the Hindu gods and goddesses are more powerful than their own.

On the other hand the Saura painted motifs have caught the imaginations of the contemporary artists and



handicraft designers who are using this in their creative painting, prints, sculptures and various handicrafts. New experiments have yeilded good results. Through tribal festivals organised with the support of Government of Orissa, contemporary artists and designers have now easy access to the tribal painting. In a democratic setup these ventures will go on. But a matter of concern is that the benefits of all these developments do not reach the Sauras who are not well aware of their creative potentials and quite ignorant of the economics of art. It was never their way of living. But the Saura society is getting modernised and the demand for a civilised living is increasing too. Sauras need money and their creative potential could be harnessed for a better living.

To create the right kind of awareness a few design and production centres be established in Ganjam and Koraput districts to train the talented Saura youths in production of Saura icons.

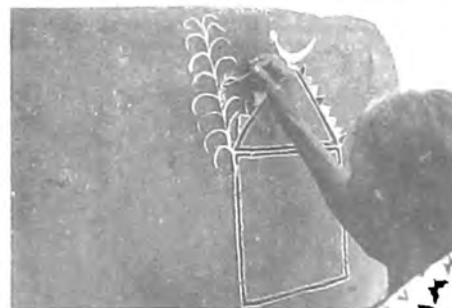
Documentation of icons
painted by Kurpani Savara
of Antarjholi village
in Padmapur area


































Saura Villages with Painters in Koraput District*

PUTTASING STYLE

VILLAGES	PAINTERS	
ALANGADA	Sania Gamang	Age 65
DUNGDUNGAR	Apinda Dalabehera	Age 58
GUNDURUBA	Makara Savara	Age 65
	Jamuru Savara	Age 32
JALTAR	Gasaru Savara	Age 58
	Maga Savara	Age 80
KERABA	Laba Savara	Age 35
LAKARJAN	Alijor Dalabehera	Age 35
MANENGUL	Sablute Savara	Age 38
PATILI	Satah Savara	Age 28
PUTTA	Indangusa Savara	Age 69
PUTTASING	Susanta Lima	Age 35
REJINTAL	Lakshmana Savara	Age 32
	Sudaru Savara	Age 35
SAGADA	Dalimraj Savara	Age 41
TOLANA	Parsia Raita	Age 29

PADMAPUR STYLE

VILLAGES	PAINTERS		
ANTARJHOLI	Kurpani Savara (W)	-	Age 62
	Sevati Savara (W)		Age 58
	Sakuntala Savara (W)	-	Age 28
GADIA BANSUA	Khata Savara	-	Age 28
KARNAPADU	Kelu Savara		Age 70
KENDUGUDA	Gopan Savara	-	Age 63
LAKSHMANGUDA	Lankada Savara	-	Age 48
LIMAGUDA	Punia Savara		Age 35
MARICHAGUDA	Nakula Savara	-	Age 27
PERPANG	Patra Savara		Age 30
	Shambaru Muli	-	Age 45
RAMACHANDRAGUDA	Krushna Savara	-	Age 24
SANDHIKHALA	Tumbe Muli	-	Age 52
SAURASINGIPUR	Jaya Gamang		Age 32
	Tumba Savara	-	Age 39
SIKULIPADARA	Sanapadani Savara		Age 38

Documented in the year 1991

Saura Villages with Painters in Ganjam District*

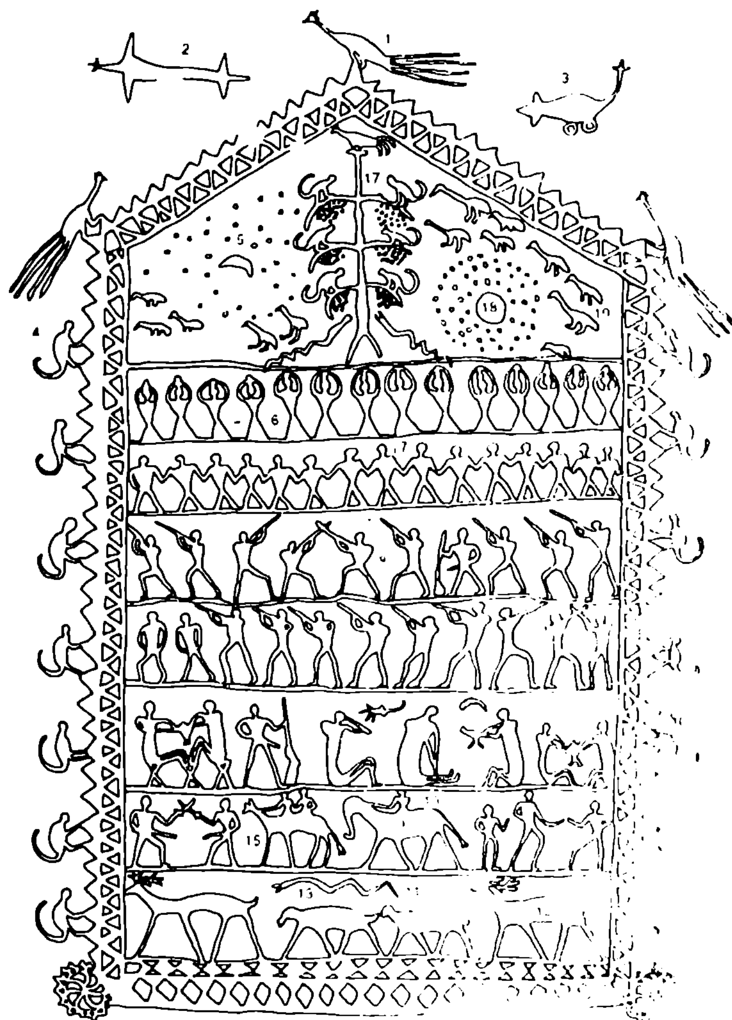
SERANGA STYLE

VILLAGES	PAINTERS	
ANGDA	Kedaru Gamang	Age 42
GUMMA	Marka Savara	Age 42
	Meghanada Savara	Age 34
HALDUL	Sunata Buiya	Age 40
MANIBA	Sania Gamang	Age 36
PELAR	Isana Buiya	Age 52
RUNGRUNGBA	Nivana Savara	Age 41
SERANGA	Rasana Buiya	Age 40
	Pushkara Chinchani	Age 40
SINDIBA	Rasana Savara	Age 38
SITRIGUDA	Erendu Gamang	Age 40
TARIGI	Kedaru Savara	Age 29
TARBAUL	Rasana Raita	Age 40
TUBURUDA	Kantaru Buiya	Age 29

* *Documented in the year 1991*

MOHANA STYLE

VILLAGES	PAINTERS	
BAMI	Lakshya Savara	Age 36
CHANDIPUTU	Manika Savara	Age 42
CHANDRAGIRI	Rapi Savara	Age 50
GUNDAGUDA	Jabi Gamang	Age 32
GOCHHAGUDA	Ganga Savara	Age 52
JAGANNATHPUR	Enkena Savara	Age 30
	Rupa Savara	Age 51
	Radhamohan Savara	Age 25
KAPAKHALA	Kartika Badaraita	Age 25
	Duini Gamang	Age 30
	Aruna Gamang	Age 25
LENJA	Lavanya Savara (W)	Age 45
MADHURAAMBA	Bhimasena Jani	Age 20
PATHARAGADA	Abhimanyu Karji	Age 30
PODASANKHA	Chanakya Savara	Age 28
	Kartika Nayak	Age 20
SIRISPADA	Sraba Gamang	Age 50
TARAMALA	Mina Jani	Age 28



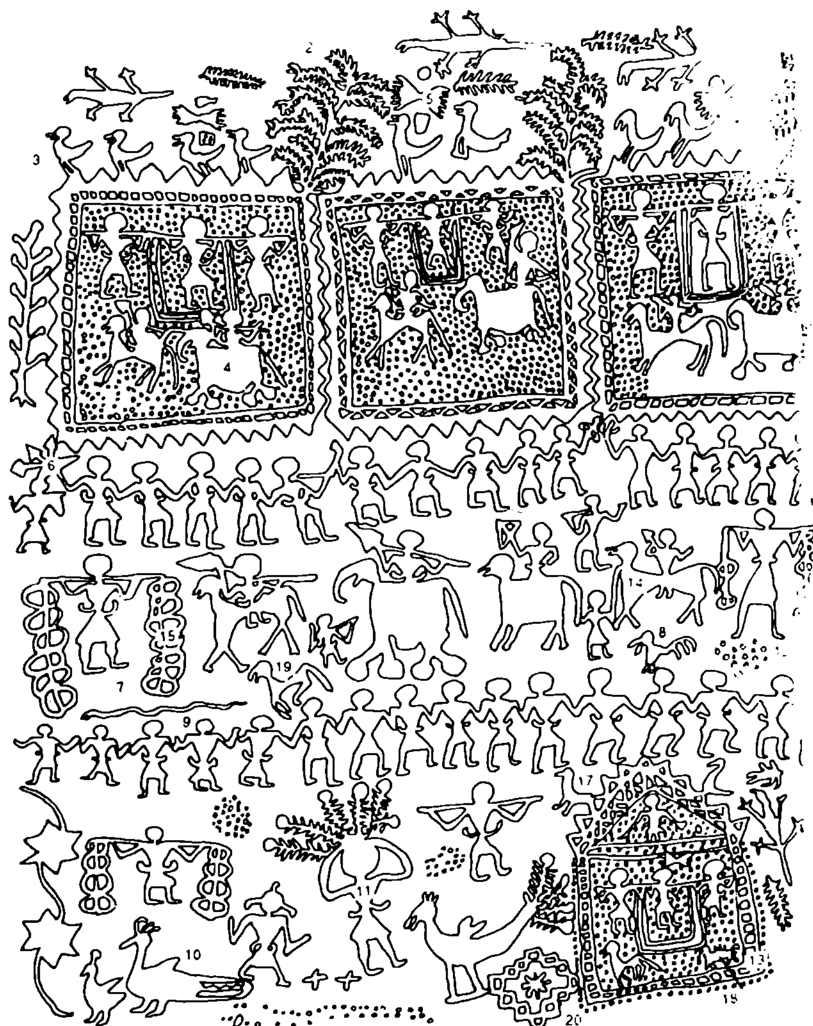
Icons for Mortuary Ceramony, Puttasing Area

1. Mara - Peacock
2. Endarei - Aeroplane
3. Arai - Monkey
4. Angatta - Moon
5. Mandranji - Woman carrying waterpot
6. Salammandrasi - Dancing Woman/man
7. Mandrangi - Dancers
8. Mundamgum - Hunters
9. Ra - Elephant
10. Ramandrun - Elephant Rider
11. Jada - Snake
12. Aliban - Deer
13. Bada - Jackle
14. Mantar rail - Train
15. Goada - Horse
16. Kinan - Tiger
17. Pedeinib - Tree
18. Oingom - Sun
19. Kankarada - Crane
20. Lambar - Disc, wheel

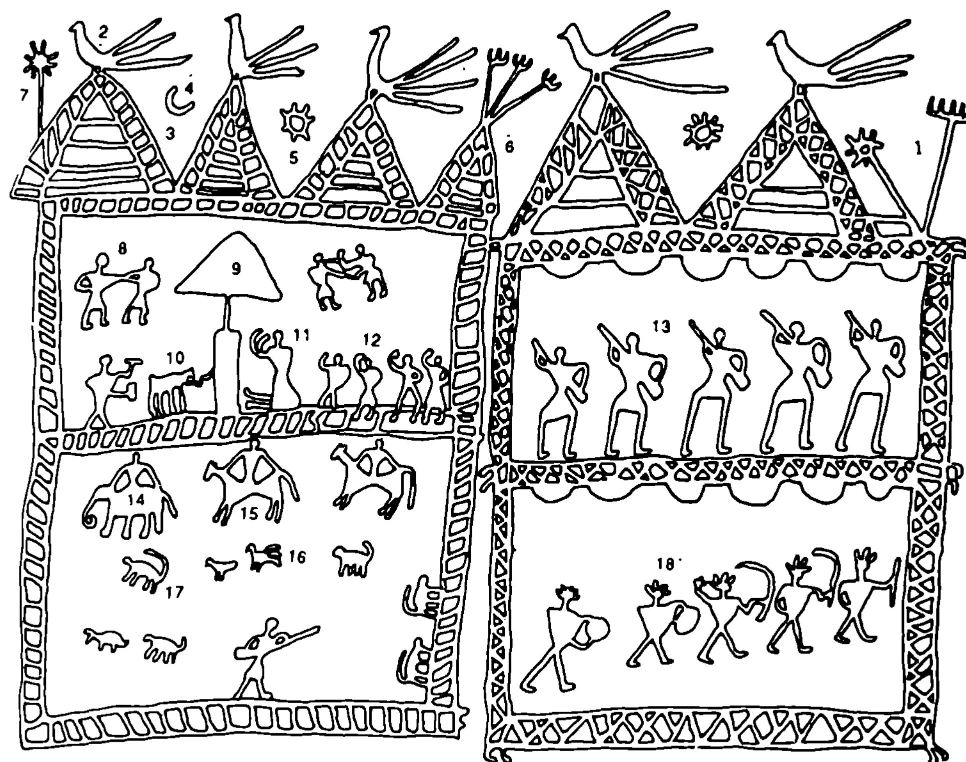
Icons for Mortuary ceremony, Puttasing area-Schematic Drawing

Icons for the Welfare of the village
Padmapur Area

1. Denangla	- Lizard
2. Pedeinib	- Tree
3. Anti	- Duck
4. Ati	- Elephant
5. Sevaram	- Comb
6. Yanganam	- Boue
7. Budar	- Crocodile
8. Kumbheimal	- Potter
9. Kausimen	- Cock
10. Samar	- Scorpion
11. Mara	- Peacock
12. Mandranji	- Standing person
13. Tupa	- Dot
14. Kudi	- Border
15. Kurta	- House
16. Saleyan	- Pot
17. Darpuna	- Mirror
18. Pander	- Black buck
19. Kimbhe	- Dog
20. Drameyan	- Cat
21. Lada	- House for ghost



Icons for the Welfare of the village, Padmapur area-Schematic Drawing



Icons for the Ghost Spirit.
Seranga Area

1.	Sigeh	- Coconut
2.	Mara	- Peacock
3.	Dengase	- Hill
4.	Angatta	- Moon
5.	Oingo	- Sun
6.	Kurtarge	- House roof
7.	Gonda Pedeinb	- Palm tree
8.	Anchalbai	- Woman
9.	Mandna	- Shrine for Goddess
10.	Kime	- Goat
11.	Kudamboi	- Priest
12.	Salam man	- Dancer
13.	Mundamgam	- Hunter
14.	Afimanto	- Elephant rider
15.	Mundamsara	- Horse rider
16.	Kachim	- Cock
17.	Arai	- Monkey
18.	Boiboiding	- Drummer

Icons for the Ghost spirit, Seranga area-
Schematic Drawing

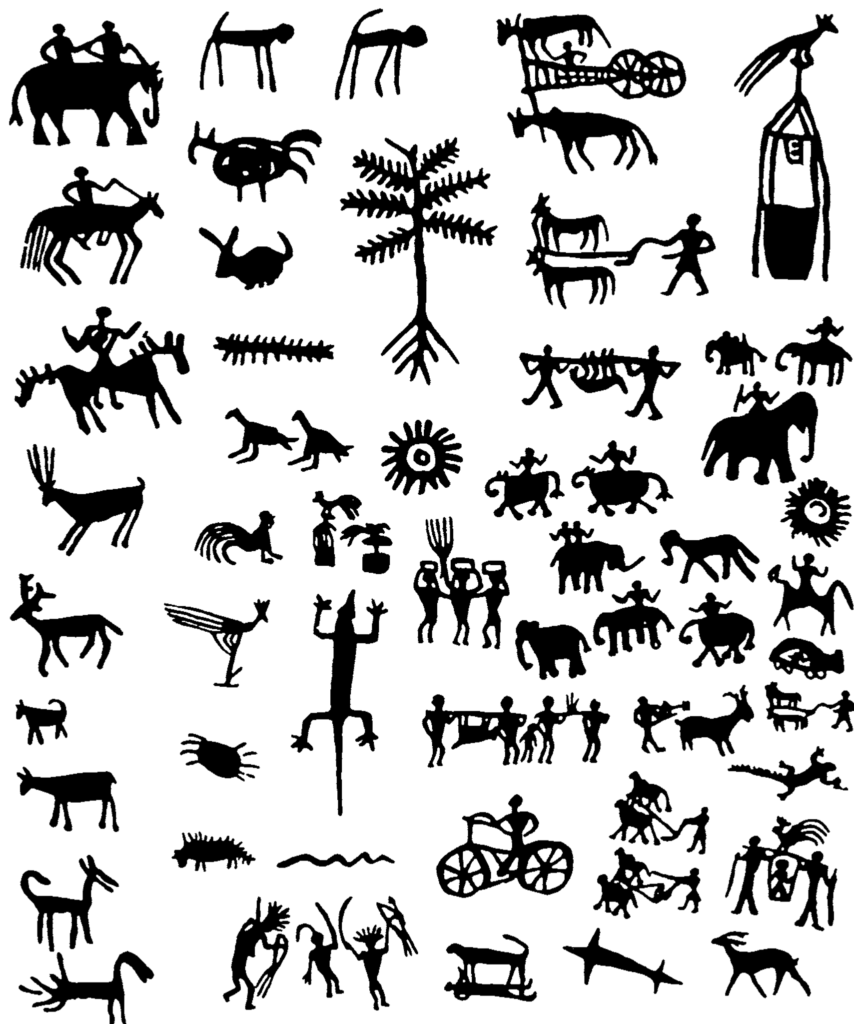
Icons for fertility

Mohana Area

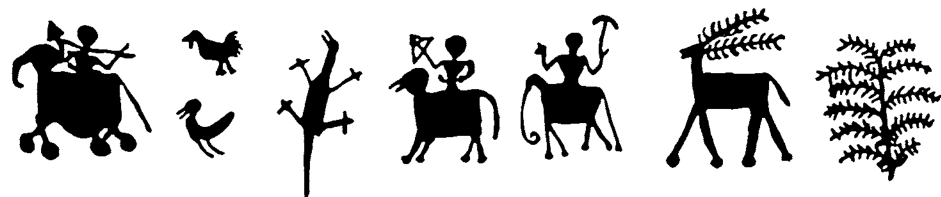
1.	Ati	- Elephant
2.	Dankisam	- Wine drinking person
3.	Gobada	- Woman digging
4.	Tangli	- Bullock
5.	Oingo	- Sun
6.	Angatta	- Moon
7.	Jalisurenda	- Chariot
8.	Aninn	- Tree
9.	Kena	- Tiger
10.	Mara	- Peacock
11.	Marasu	- Pefowl
12.	Gungi	- Worship of Mother Earth
13.	Chinelunge	- Fish
14.	Pendaru	- Rabbit
15.	Tarba	- Flower Plant
16.	Kinti assim	- Banana plant
17.	Kachim	- Cock
18.	Babusam	- Goddess
19.	Kinsar	- Deer
20.	Arsi	- Monkey
21.	Pangjunkunib	- Woman who carries food for her husband in the field
22.	Baser	- Buck
23.	Bedaru	- Man carrying load on a balance
24.	Raeta	- Agricultural labourer
25.	Yangamandre	- Gun man
26.	Saudrute	- To follow a hunt



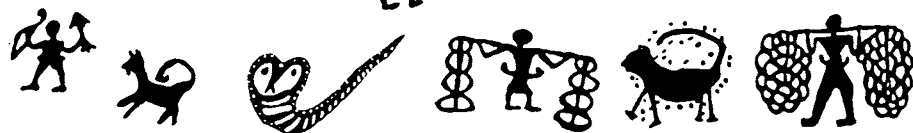
Icons for Fertility, Mohana area-Schematic Drawing

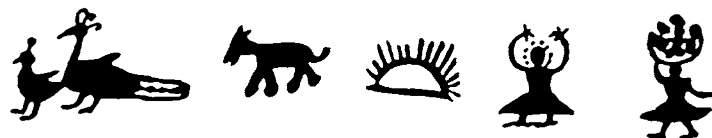


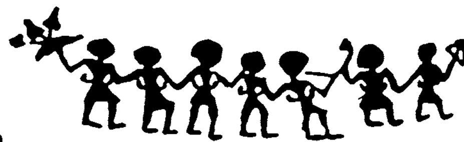
Motifs from Puttasing area



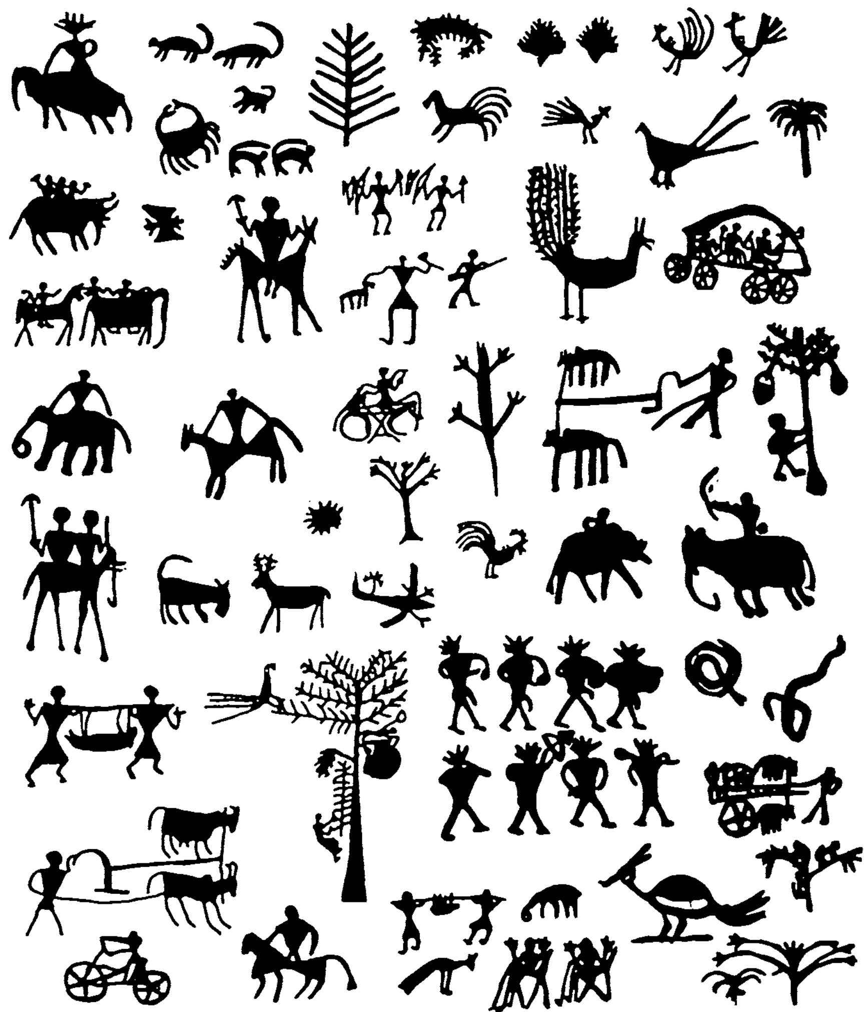








Motifs from Padmapur area



Motifs from Seranga area



Motifs from Mohana area



Jamuru Savara



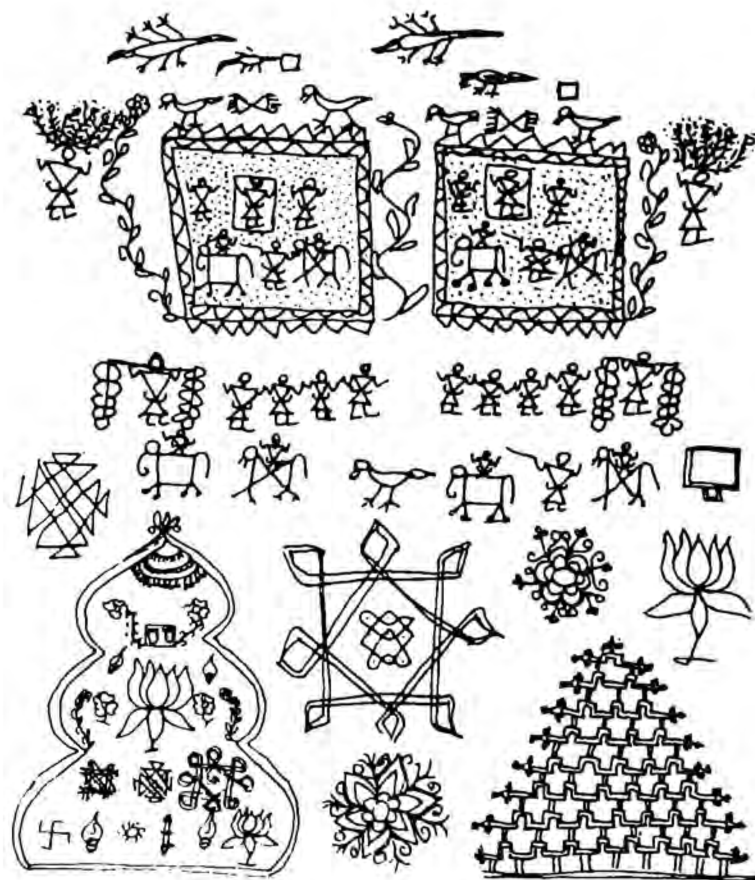
Sketches by Jamuru Savara of Gunduruba village

Sketeches by Marka Savara ofGumm Village

96a. Marka Savara



Sakuntala Savara



Sketches by Sakuntala Savara of Antarjholi village



Icons on wall in Dungdungar village



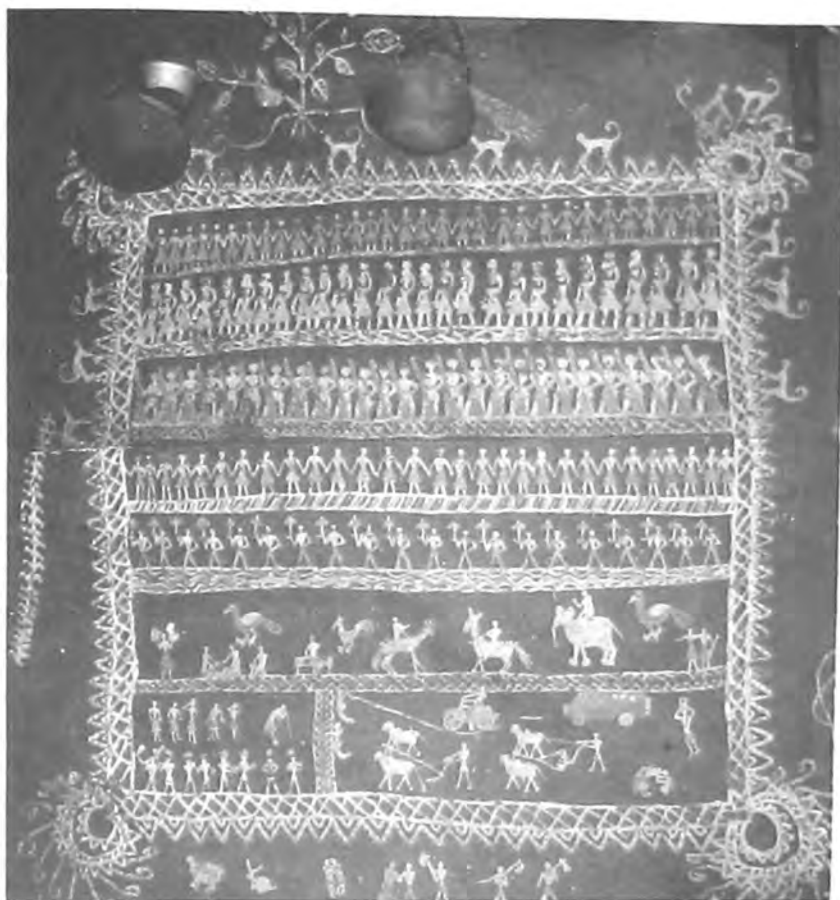
Icons on wall in Putta village



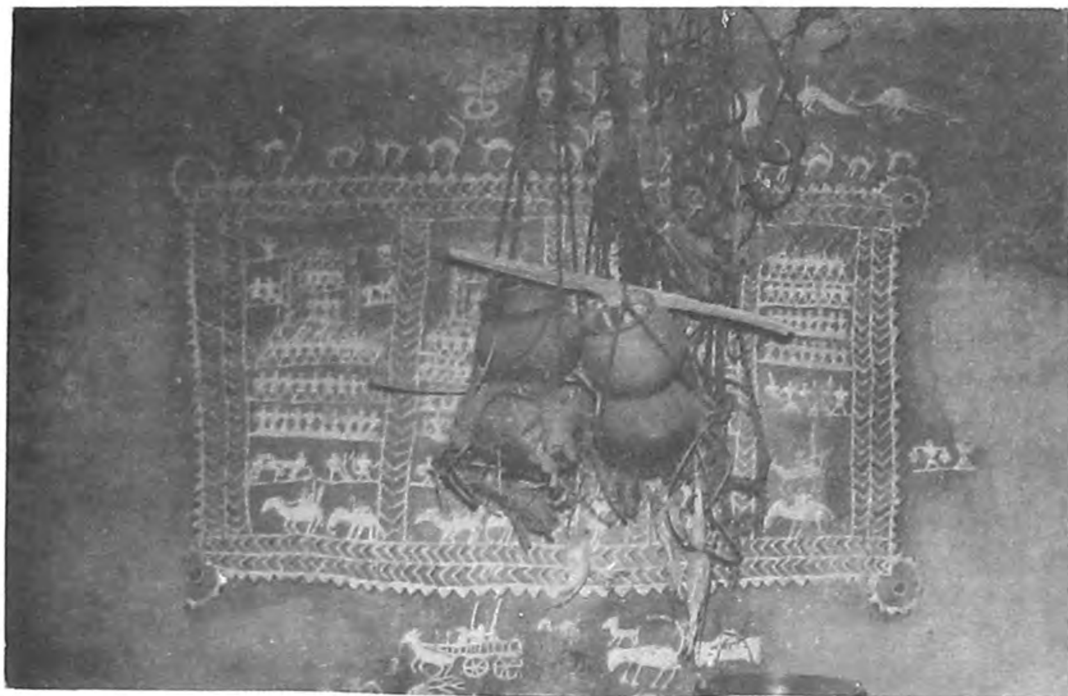
Icons on wall in Gunduruba village



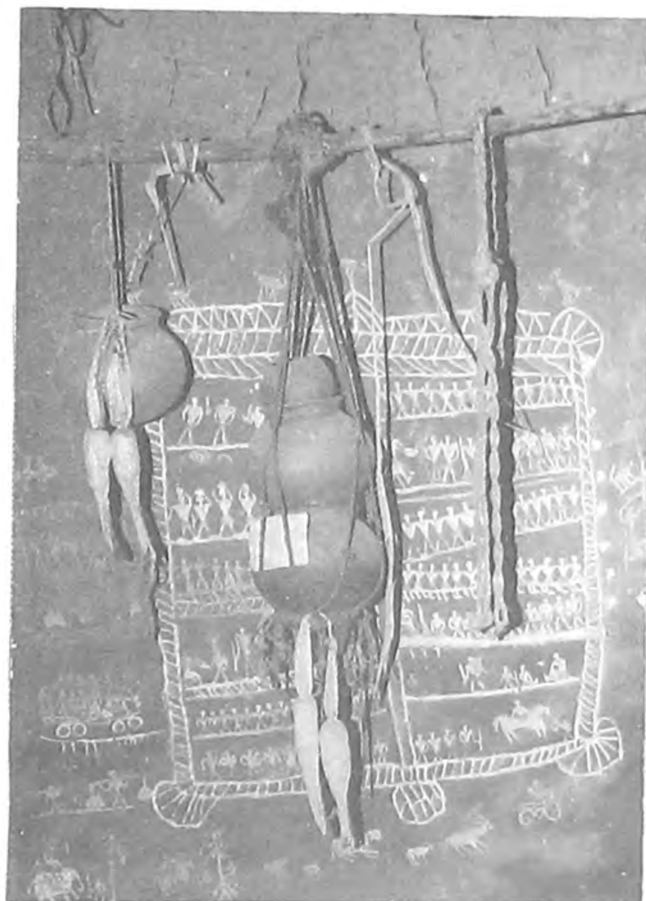
Icons on wall in Gunduruba village



Icons on wall in Tolana village



Icons on wall in Keraba village



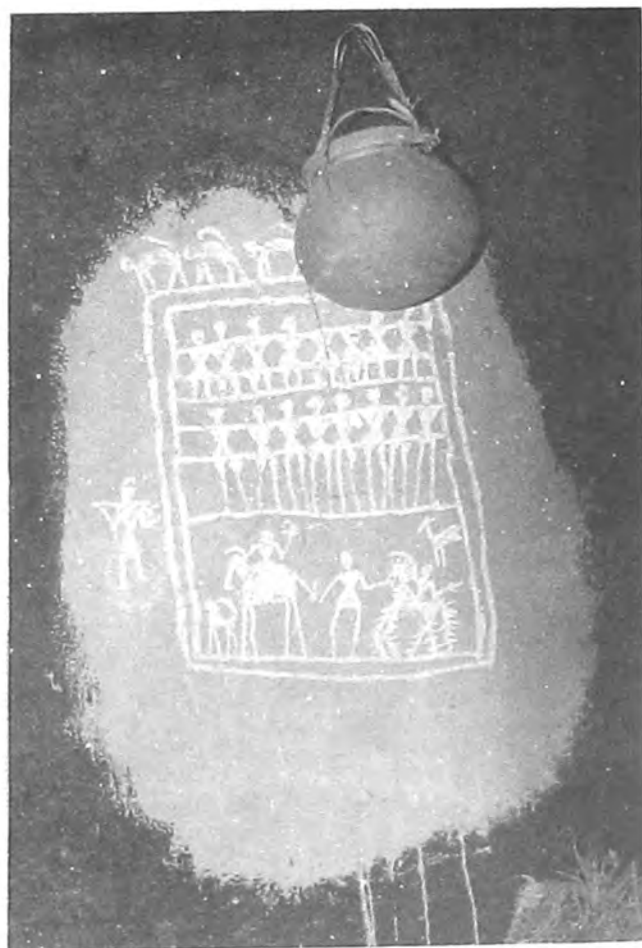
Icons on wall in Tolana village



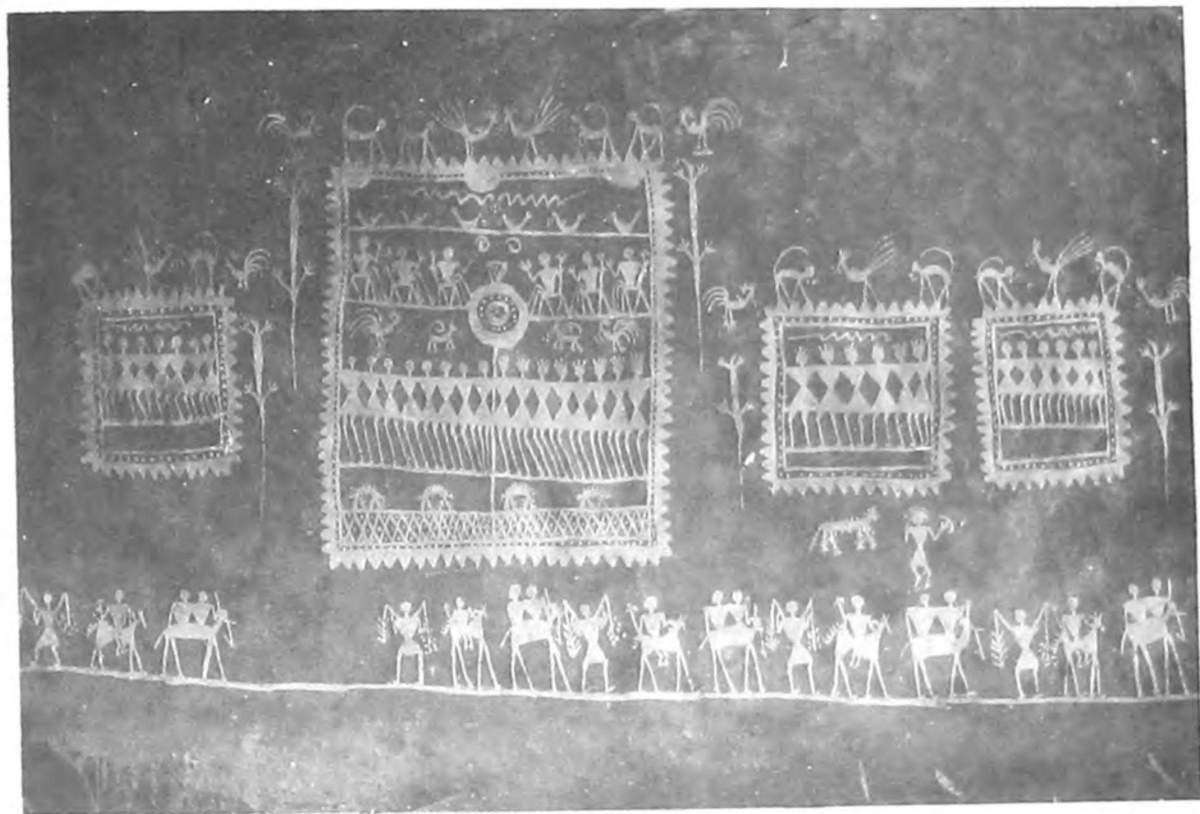
Icons on wall in Gunduruba village



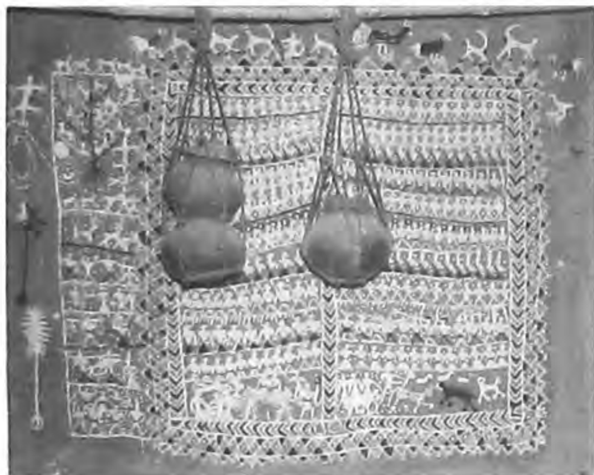
Icons on wall in Rungrungba village



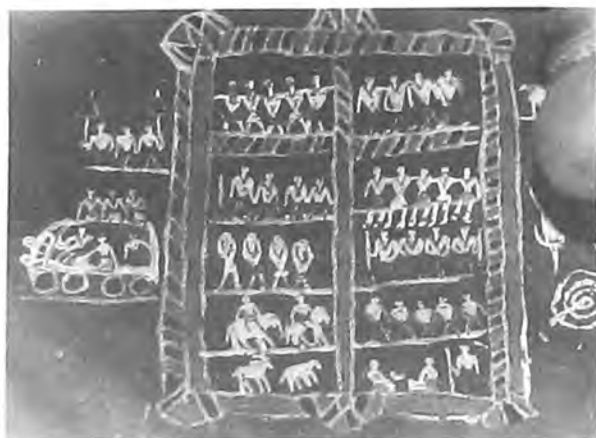
Icons on wall in Gumma village



Icons on wall in Angada village



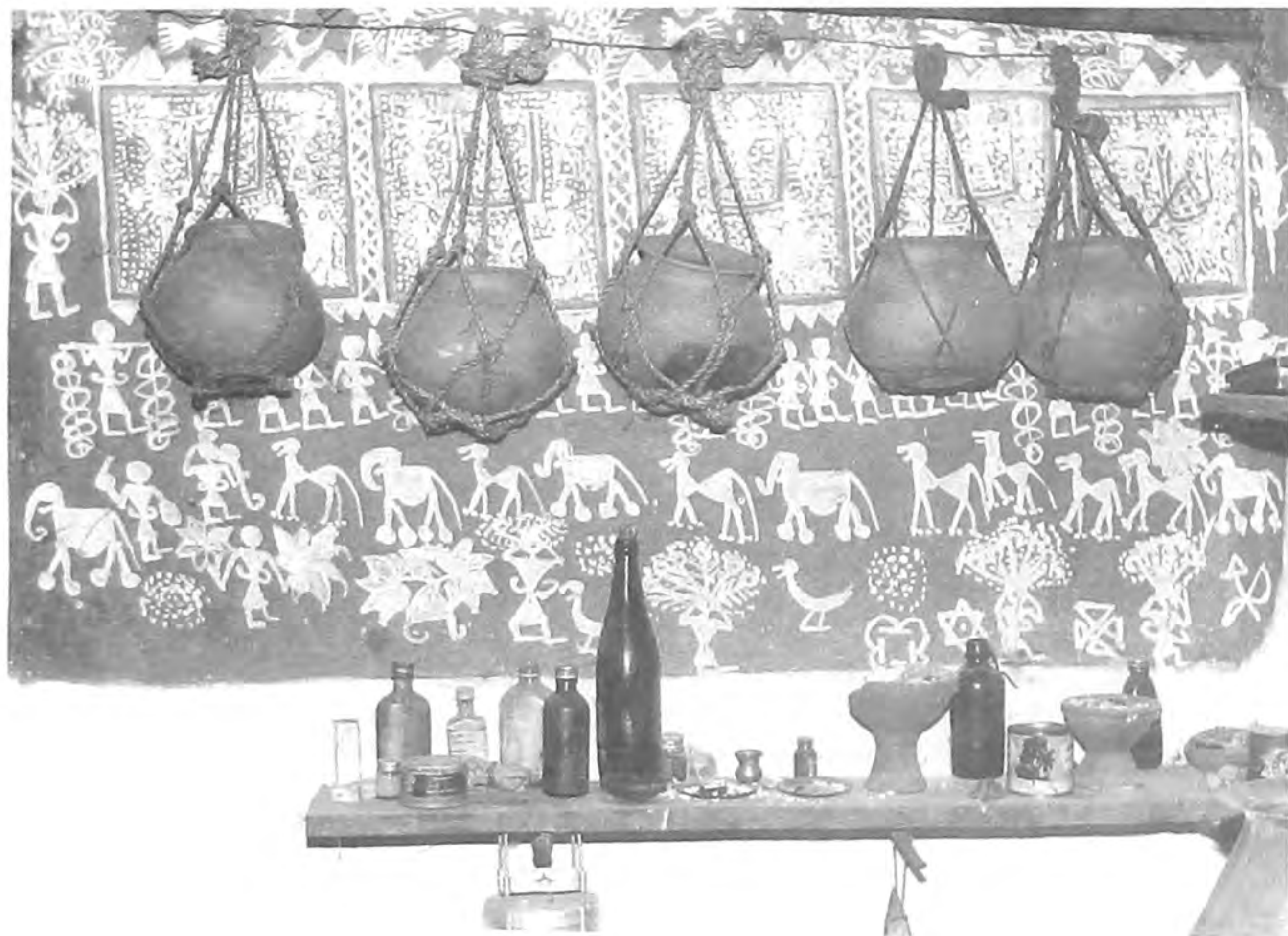
Icons on wall in Sandhikhala village



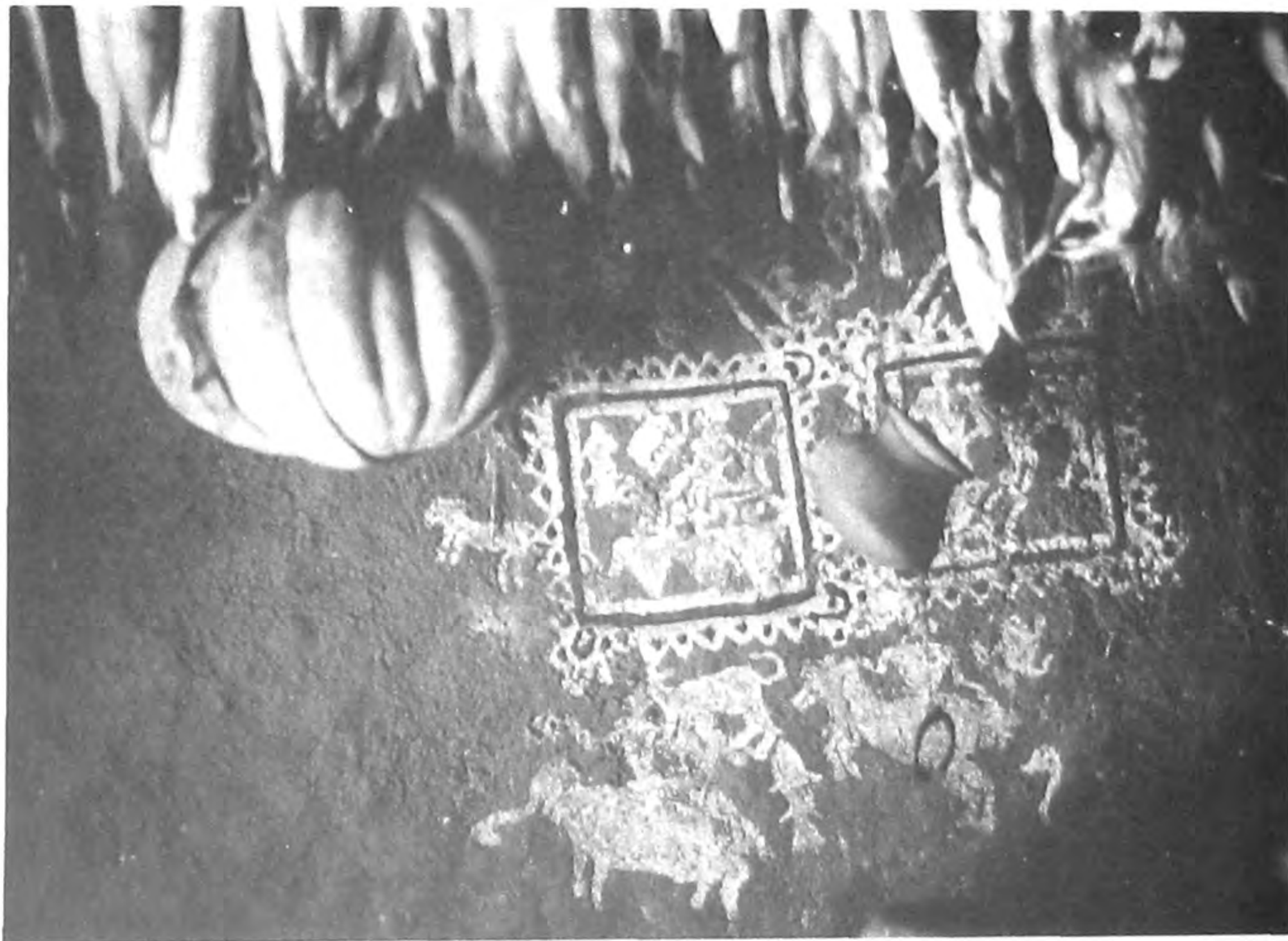
Icons on wall in Karnapadu village



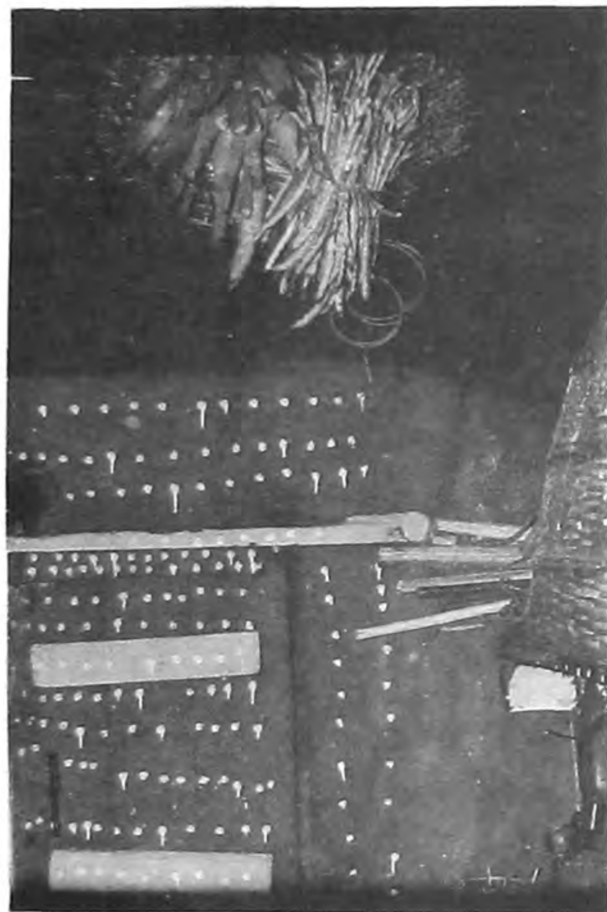
Icons on wall in Limaguda village



Icons on wall in Antarjholi village



Icons on wall in Lenja village

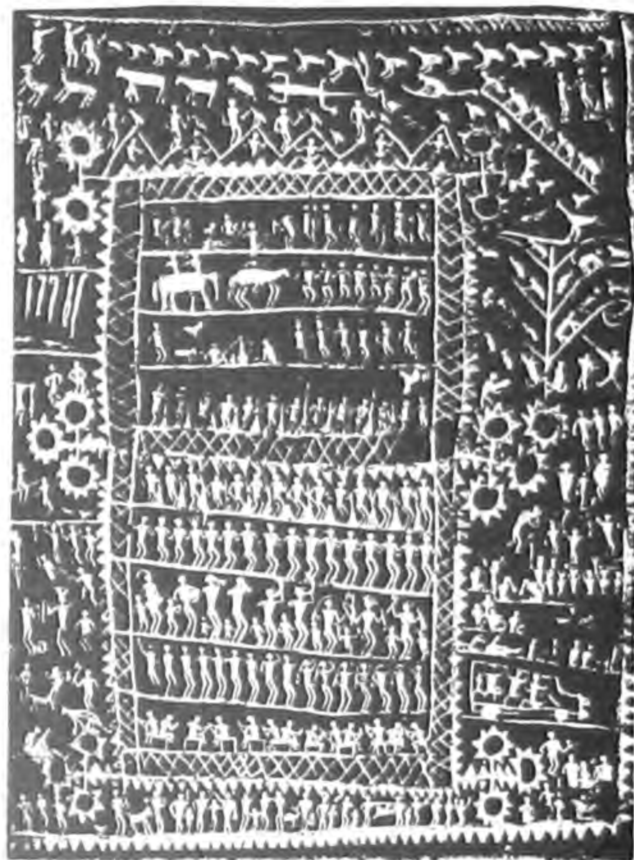

Icons on wall in Patharagada village


Icons on wall in Jagannathpur village





Icons on paper by Gasaru Savara of Jaltar village



Icons on paper by Sablute Savara of Manengul village



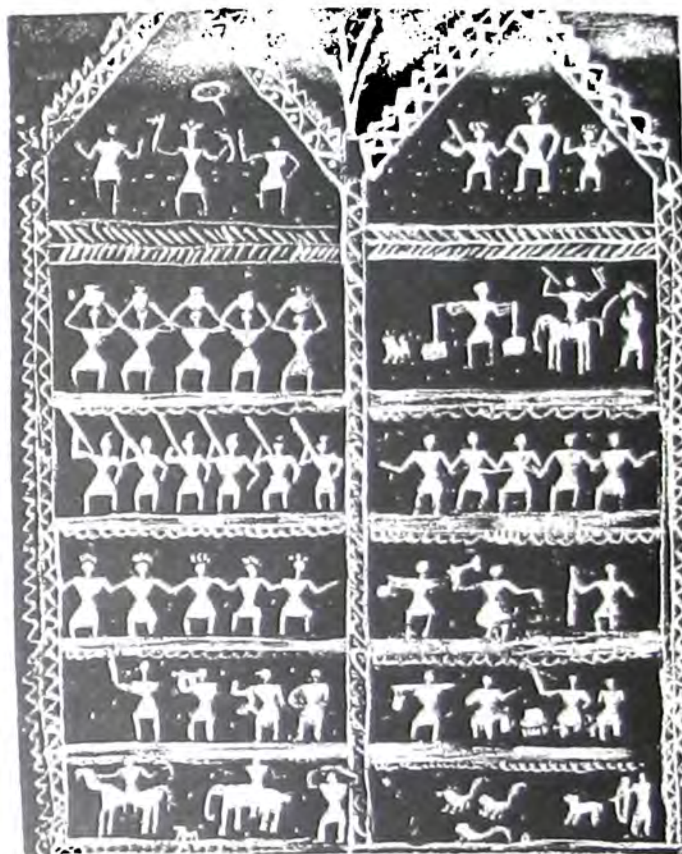
Icons on paper by Jatina Savara of Rejintal village



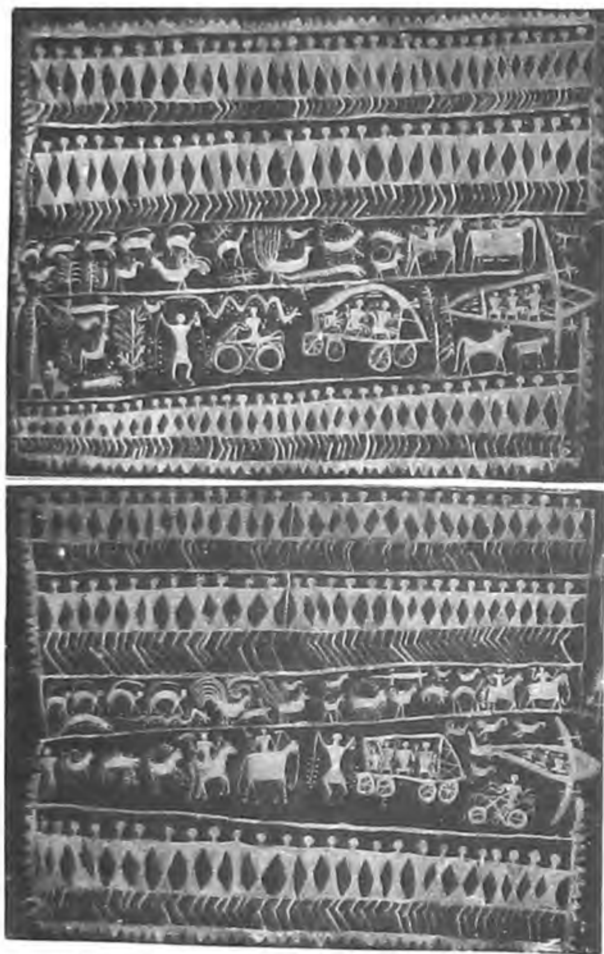
Icons on paper by Kedaru Gamang of Angada village



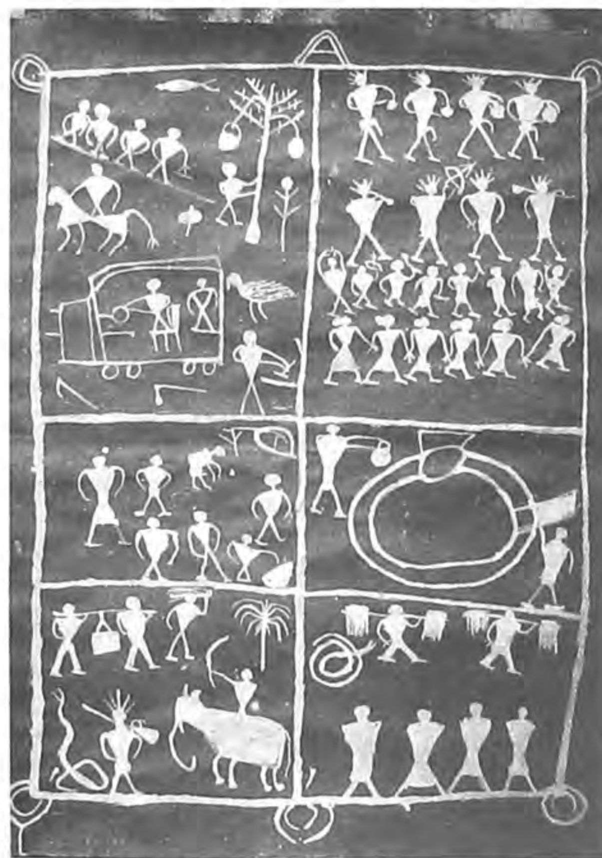
Icons on paper by Dalimraj Savara of Sagada village



Icons on paper by Lakshmana Savara of Rejintal village



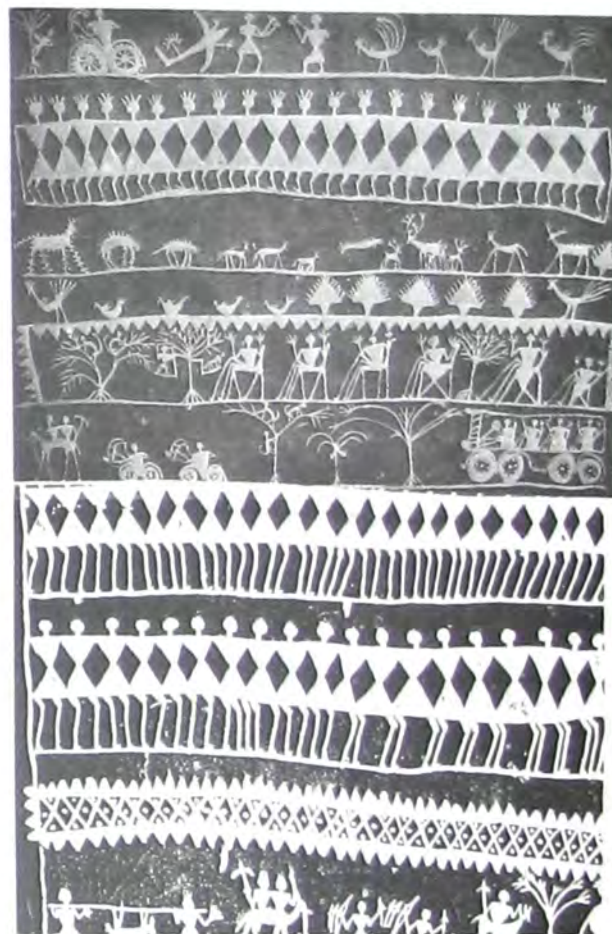
Icons on paper by Sania Gamang of Maniba Village



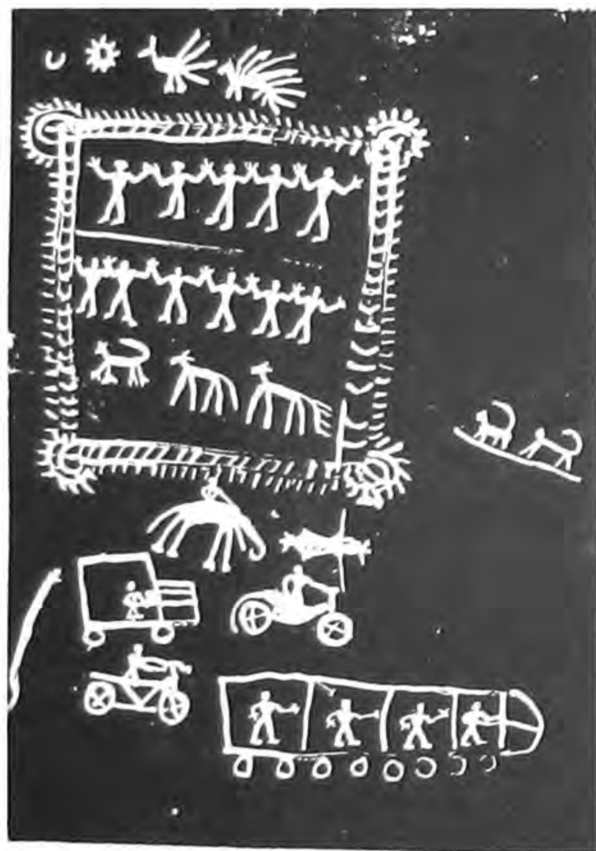
Icons on paper by Kantaru Buiya of Tuburuda village



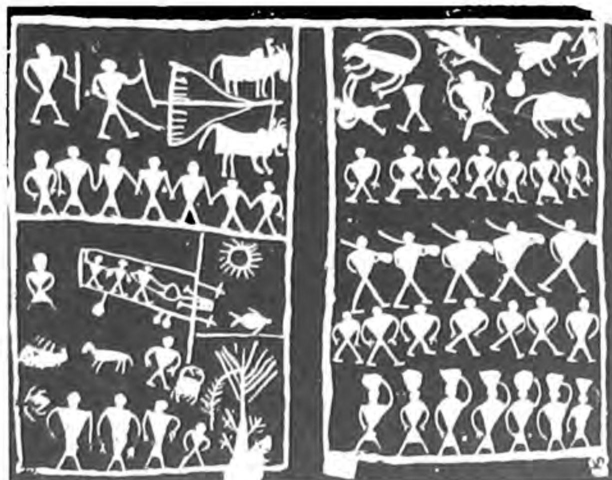
Icons on paper by Kedaru Savara of Tarigi village



Icons on paper by Pushkar Chinchani of Seranga village

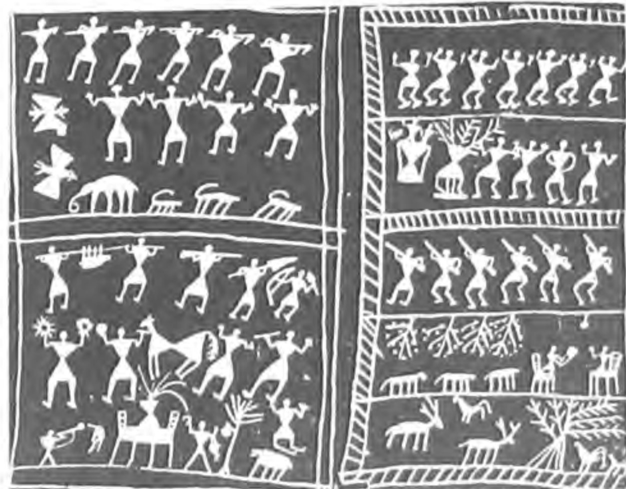


Icons on paper by Sunata Buiya of Haldul village

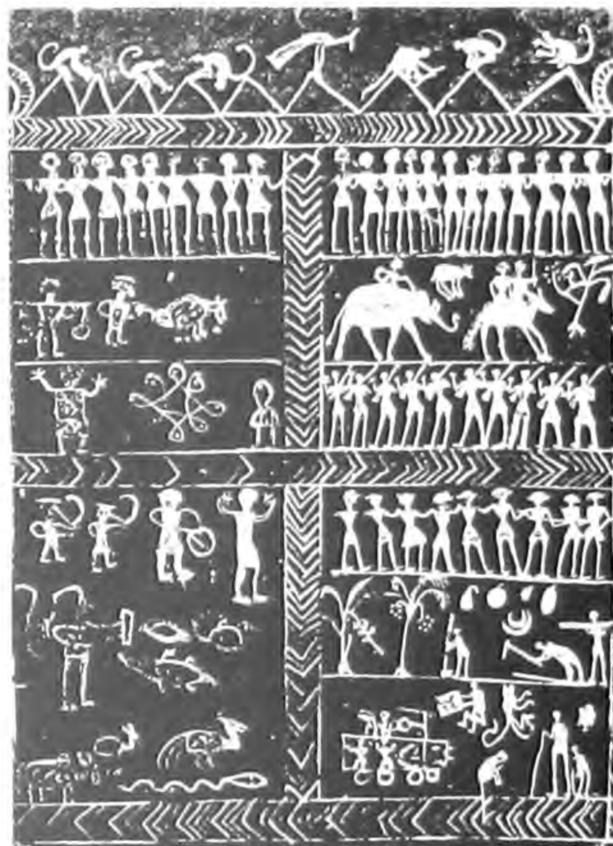


Icons on paper by Kedaru Gamang of Angada village





Icons on paper by Marka Savara of Gumma Village



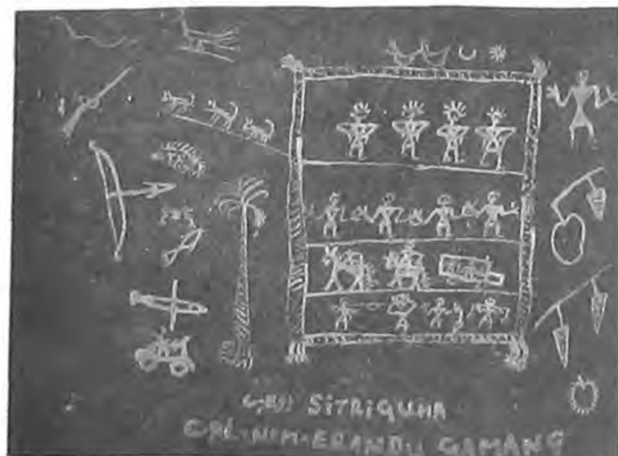
Icons on paper by Nivana Savara of Rungrungaba Village



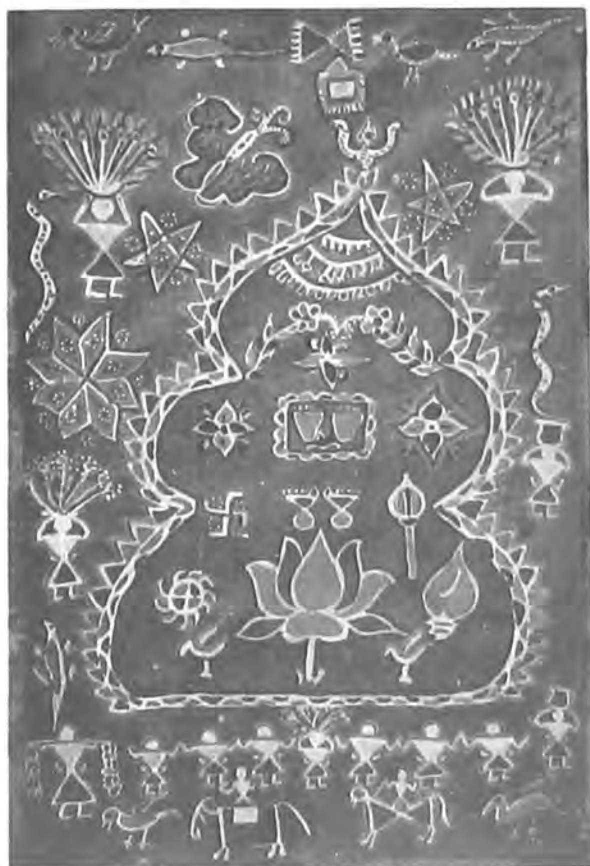
Icon on paper by Rasana Buiya of Seranga village



135. Icons on paper by Rasna Buiya of Seranga village



Icons on paper by Erendu Gamango of Sitriguda village



Icons on paper by Sakuntala Savara of Antarjholi village



Icons on paper by Sevati Savara of Antarjholi village



Icons on paper by Kartika Nayaka of Podasankha village



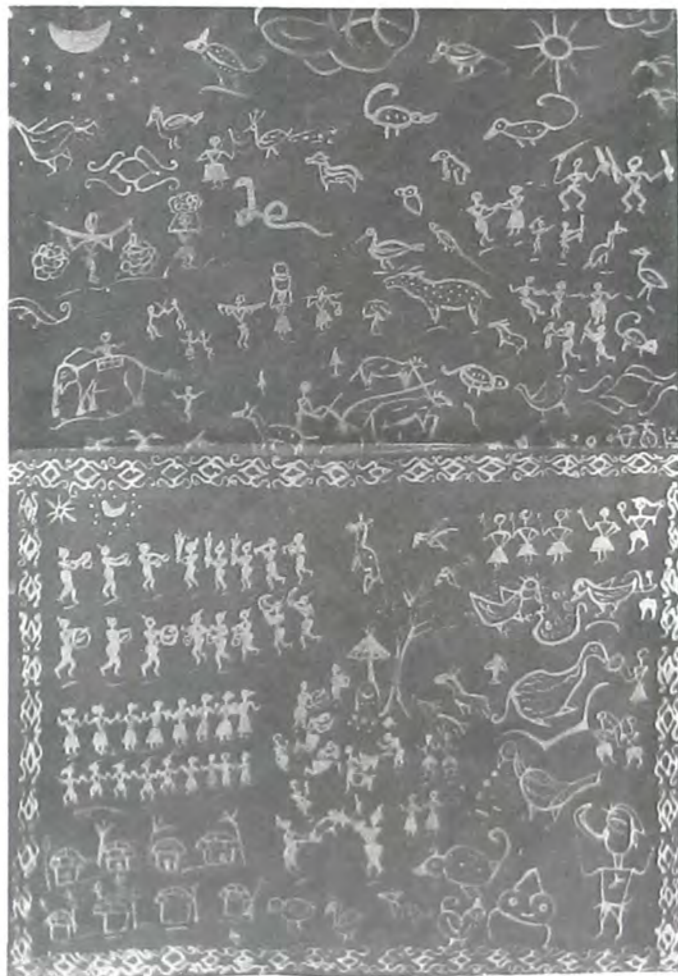
Icons on paper by Aruna Gamang, of Kapakhala village



Icons on paper by Abhimanyu Karji of Patharagada village

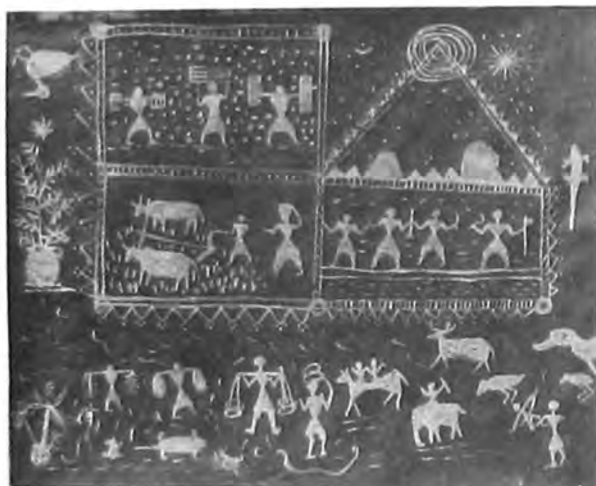


Icons on paper by Chanakya Savara of Podasankha village



Icons on paper by Sraba Gamang of Sirispada village

Icons on paper by Enkana Savara of Jagannathpur village





Icons on paper by Kartika Badaraita of Kapakhala viallage





Icons on paper by Mina Jani of Taramala village



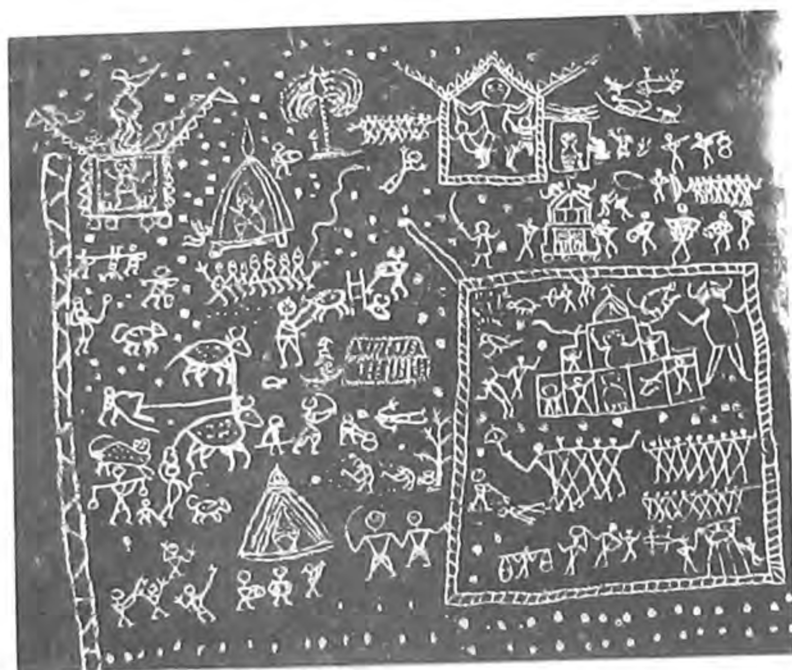

Icons on paper by Duini Gamango of Kapakhala village





Icons on paper by Tumba Savara of Saurasingipur village





Icons in Jagannathpur village

Dr. DINANATH PATHY started his career as a muralist and theatre curtain painter in South Orissa. He received Diploma in Fine Arts from Govt. School of Art and Crafts, Khallikote. He did his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Utkal University and also Ph.D. in Art History from Visva Bharati.

A practising contemporary painter, designer, and illustrator of children books, Dr. Pathy held various posts *viz.* Visualiser for several National and International exhibitions, Commissioner for Festival of India in Sweden and USSR, 1987, Indian Commissioner for the 7th Triennale, 1990, Cairo Biennale 1992, Director and Convenor of International Seminar of Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

He was awarded President of India Silver Plaque for painting and A.L. Basham Memorial Award for creative research. He authored more than twenty titles in German, English and Oriya, besides the publication of his poetry anthology *Avanti* and biographical sketch *The Drawing Master of Digapahandi.*



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